









THE  
FREE CHURCH PULPIT,

OR  
Sermons and Lectures

BY  
EMINENT SCOTTISH DIVINES.

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A NEW EDITION.

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## P R E F A C E.

IN projecting the FREE CHURCH PULPIT, two objects were contemplated. One was to provide a weekly supply of Sabbath reading for the body of the people, and especially for those who, though attached to the Free Church, cannot be reached by her with the regular administration of public ordinances. It was thought that this could not be more suitably and acceptably done than by a series of sermons, furnished by ministers of the Free Church, and so presenting to the minds of the people, in their own homes, the very same kind and style of instruction which they desire to enjoy in the sanctuary.

Another object was to provide what might hereafter prove a memorial of those ministers who, at the era of the disruption in 1843, had nobly surrendered all for the sake of Christ and of his truth. It was thought that this could not be better effected than by collecting specimens of their ordinary pulpit ministrations, and thus exhibiting to this and coming generations the character of that preaching which obtains among so distinguished a body of the servants of Christ, and which is relished by that mass of the people of Scotland who compose the congregations at present under their care. In perusing the past history of the Church of Scotland, many must have regretted the want of such a memorial of the ministers who were ejected in 1662; and it does not seem presumptuous to anticipate the desire of a similar record of those who, at the present day, have borne the



same emphatic testimony to Christ's kingly prerogatives. With this object in view, the contributors to the present volume are composed exclusively of ministers who held charges at the time of the disruption; and the same rule will be observed in the compilation of the next.

The plan originally desired has, so far as it has yet been carried out, been executed in a manner which, it is trusted, is not unworthy of the Free Church, and which has not only obtained a gratifying measure of acceptance for the work, but has, under the Divine blessing, proved eminently beneficial to many; and it is confidently expected that the succeeding volumes will be not less characterized by the various qualities which mark the sermons of the Free Church's ministers, nor less conducive to the spiritual good of her people.



# FREE CHURCH PULPIT.

## SERMON I.

THE FREEDOM OF GOSPEL WORSHIP FROM LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND  
NATIONAL PECULIARITIES ASSERTED.

BY THE REV. JAMES SIEVERIGHT. A.M., MARKINCH.

(Preached at the Opening of the Free Church, Markinch.)

*"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."—JOHN iv. 24.*

THE argument from antiquity, or from ancestry, is wonderfully convenient for minds that, averse from patient inquiry and discriminating thought, love to acquiesce in the traditionary belief of former generations, without caring to ascertain if the convictions of past ages were consonant to truth, or if there be anything in the present order of Providence that would justify or demand a departure from the creed and customs of those that went before. To this easy-minded class belonged the woman of Samaria, who, in the conference with our Lord here recorded, held up the usage of progenitors as a shield impenetrable—she thought, to every form of objection, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." This was enough; here she took her stand, and on the same ground stood her countrymen and the Jewish nation generally, when Christianity was first proposed to them. On this ground, too, did the heathen of old, and the heathen that now are, allege their fathers' belief as a reason for not listening to the claims of Divine revelation. Precisely similar was the position tenaciously maintained by the blinded opponents of reformation in Luther's day; while among ourselves, numbers have no better reason, or, at least, will give us no better reason, for worshipping God in certain places, than that advanced by the woman of Samaria—"Our fathers worshipped there."

No. 1.—SER. 1.

Such was her plea, and to this plea she would probably have adhered till her dying hour, had she argued with one less mighty to enlighten and convince than Christ; but it was in his heart to rescue a captive of error, and bring her to a saving knowledge of the truth; and that, not by means of a long process of reasoning—not by detecting and exposing her inveterate prejudices singly and in detail, but by sweeping them away at once by the announcement of a new order of things, involving in its development the abolition of all that was local, peculiar, and ceremonial in the established worship, and substituting for it a ritual more simple, and ordinances not exclusive, but accessible to all—ordinances characterized by spirituality, and having truth without a veil substantially enshrined in them. “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

A statement so profound and unexpected, stamped with authority, and prophetic of mighty change—proceeding from the mouth of a teacher come from God—must have fallen with a weight of conviction on the hardest heart—though hers was hard no more; for, doubtless, from the very commencement of her colloquy with Christ, his spirit had touched her heart, and made it patent, as afterwards in the case of Lydia, to an honest reception of the truth. To-day, we too look up for heart-opening grace, without which, did we speak with the tongue of angels, we should scarcely convince any, and certainly not effectually persuade.

To evade questions touching personal character, the woman of Samaria tried to divert the discourse to the circumstantialities of religion, and sought to engage our Lord in debate as to the *place* of worship most acceptable to God—a question vehemently agitated in those days betwixt Samaritans and Jews. How often is a like device still resorted to by people who show themselves cold, distant, and inaccessible in matters of experimental religion, the nature of conversion, and the operations of grace, but will hold us in endless dispute as to the validity of ancient forms, and the virtue of worshipping where their fathers did. Here their zeal, which on greater points was so latent, kindles into flame, and blazes intolerantly high. To render the fuel of prejudice less combustible, however, it were well to consider what is intended by the saying of Christ, that the hour had come “when the true worshippers were to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

To establish purity of worship in the earth, was an undertaking worthy of the Son of God. In the opinion of some, we believe, it had been a nobler enterprise of philanthropy to deal directly with man's social state, to have rectified its inequalities, and provided for the secular interests of humanity, putting aside meanwhile the question of religion as

of inferior importance—a world without God, or a God without worship, well according with their views. We suppose they would regulate heaven itself on the same principles, and haply find fault with its blest inhabitants for making so much ado about devotion.

But can the creature ever forget that it holds existence—at least happy existence—on the tenure of rendering to the great Creator the glory for ever due to perfections so infinite, works so marvellous, and benefits so varied and immense? Towards such a Being is not worship a most reasonable service—a natural and necessary recognition of creature dependence—an authentic and significant expression of creature gratitude and admiration, of creature reverence and love? and to banish from the earth what constitutes man's chief duty, and so illustrates the Creator's glory, were a disparagement indeed to the majesty of God, and a degradation to ourselves; for the very act of worshipping, exceedingly exalts our nature, in bringing us nigh to God, the source and centre of all blessedness, and thereby raising in us sentiments perfective of our natures, and assimilating the adoring soul to the object it regards with supreme complacency and sacred awe. Nor can we think a supreme regard to the worship of God unfriendly to the constitution and continuance of the soundest social state; for if there be in futurity, as some anticipate, a social optimism, religion, we presume, will be its most pregnant element; and we are moreover convinced, that nothing will remedy the growing distempers of man's social state, but the bringing back a godless world (which in its wisdom knows not God, and in its folly denies him) to a devout recognition of Him whose will is destiny, and his favour better than life.

Indeed, so much stress do we lay on the proper worship of God, that we conceive all other functions of sanctuary service, derive their highest interest and importance from the tendency they have to train up souls for acceptable worship; for what nobler end can we propose to ourselves in preaching the Word with intense desires for men's conversion, than thereby to bring them to the knowledge of God, that they may eternally worship and adore him? Could we enquire of angels what they thought of worship, would they not assign to it the sublimest place among creature obligations? Doubtless the beatitude of heaven greatly consists in adoring celebrations; nor is there on earth anything that so elevates and ennobles the human soul as the holy and heart-expanding aspirations of true devotion.

If worship, then, hold so divine a place among creature duties—if it be, as it is, a final cause of creature existence for the glory of God—we repeat, that to establish purity of worship on earth was an undertaking worthy of the Son of God. He came into the world at a period when

true worship had in a measure disappeared among men. The world had long presented the sad spectacle of creatures made to glorify the infinite Creator, refusing to the King immortal the sacred tribute of adoration. Not only had the nations ceased to know and acknowledge God, but they had universally lapsed into idolatry of the most debasing kind, paying divine honours to mean and inanimate objects, as if in profane mockery of all that was divine; for so vain and wanton did they wax in the impiety of their minds, that not only was religious worship rendered to the mighty dead, and to the more imposing objects of the visible creation, such as sun, moon, and stars, but an imagery of senseless reptile forms was often added to personifications of vice, in the hateful furniture of the grove or temple.

There was, indeed, one excepted spot, when all the world besides was enshrouded in gross and guilty darkness. In Judah did the light of revelation shine, and by its discoveries were the true Israel led to seek and serve the true God. But even there, until the Sun of Righteousness arose, the light was shadowy and indistinct; and the national worship, in its greater ordinances, was restricted to Jerusalem, the place the Lord had chosen to put his name there.

Now, however, it was clearly announced that the time of local worship was at an end—that neither in that mountain nor in Jerusalem should men worship God exclusively—that all places, in fine, were henceforth to be alike sacred, considered in themselves—spirit and truth, the great essentials, being limited to no clime, nor class, nor situation. On this ground, we use the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and count it no offence to retire from an ancient and long-venerated place of worship, when it has lost what entitled it in our estimation to respect or veneration. We hold, agreeably to the oracle before us, that no sanctity attaches to place, and none to the mere materials of a fabric, of whatever form, or wherever erected—whether in Judea or Japan, in Caledonia or Cabul. No! the God whom we worship is a Spirit, of infinite being, universal presence, and unlimited manifestation; and where he deigns to manifest himself, whether in stately edifice or moveable tent, or, apart from the work of man's hands, beneath the open firmament of heaven—it matters not—the Divine presence, and that only, gives sanctity to the scene. With these views, we ascribe no sanctity to the ground on which we stand; nor do we call in superstition to-day, in opening this house for public worship, to throw over its walls a mystery and spell of would-be consecration, as if that would operate as a charm for securing the Divine presence, or for retaining it, should the worshippers degenerate, and the worship cease to be pure. Instead of symbolizing with apostate Rome and its emulous affiliations in what they deem indispen-

sable to a place of worship, we would follow the simpler, sublimer, and more rational example of Solomon at the dedication of the house which he had built for God. With as little of ceremony, then, (and O that we could add, with a like tone and spirit of high devotion), would we pronounce his words as our form of dedication; and as we read, let every pious mind appropriate the strain—"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day: hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, forgive." 1 Kings viii. 27.

We lay little stress on what men call consecration, as imparting sanctity to place; but we do lay stress on the promise of Christ, "that where two or three meet together in his name, he will be in the midst of them." What need we more? The thought and feeling of that presence will give to this place, in the estimation of true worshippers, a hallowed air of unearthly fragrance—a perpetual sanctity that will impress and overawe, far above the grandest spectacles of man's decorative contrivance; and we cannot this day forego the hope that here, for many days, shall the grace and glory of the Divine presence be known and felt, while true worship, apart from impure mixture, shall, we trust, be offered unto God by a willing people. "The temple of God is holy," says the Apostle. What temple had the Apostle in view? Was it the temple at Jerusalem, or any great edifice of Christian erection? To many a modern ear, the expression would, peradventure, suggest a cathedral pile, or, at least, some consecrated place, as they call it; but mark the Apostle's explanation, when he adds, "which temple are ye." The living temple, then, the man who "sanctifies the Lord God in his heart," is the only temple recognised in the New Testament, and into such temples will Jehovah come. Let none, then, be troubled in mind because our places of worship want the hoar of antiquity, and deviate from the wonted form and accompaniments of the long-regarded parish church. We claim antiquity for our principles, and for our order of worship, and thus far we religiously shun innovation. But as to our places of worship, which are reviled by many as modern and mean—they have, we think, something more than age and error to attach us to them. Our spirits prize the liberty of Christ, and feel that a new impulse is given to devotion by its disengagement from limitations of time and place, to which multitudes are still in bondage, through ignorance that the hour is come when spirit and truth are the only indispensable requisites of acceptable worship.

Having, in the foregoing remarks, briefly handled the question of *place*, we shall, in the sequel, with still greater conciseness, advert to certain other abuses of the religious principle, in matters pertaining to the service of God. And, first, we have to notice a class that place religion in *forms*, and in these only. By this sort of people, spirit and truth are clean lost sight of, and never missed. Give them but a certain amount of formal acts and observances pertaining to the externals of religion, and they ask nothing more; and it must be confessed, that, as to many of this class, wonderfully little, even of form, contents them; insomuch that to appear twice in church on a Sabbath day would be reckoned the being "righteous over much." A single attendance is as much as some may endure, and that attendance characterized by bodily presence, and bodily exercise merely, without exercise of mind, or spirit of devotion. And were the weekly order of life inquired into, it would be found that, deducting the incident of Sabbath worship, there would appear neither trace nor token of religious engagement in all the six-day scene of customary occupation. How little even of "the form of godliness" can be here detected?

The religion of form, however, assumes a very different aspect where lordly superstition bears sway. For, instead of the few simple forms compatible with our mode of worship, in some religious communities a complex and engrossing rubric is brought in, which exacts a world of time, care, and devotion—devotion, we mean, to its own formalities, and not to God; for, were his majestic and awful Being regarded in the act of worship, the thought of his greatness would so possess the soul, as not to leave space for the exhibition of operose and fantastic ceremonies, which Rome of old invented, and which an ascendant Prelacy now fondly copies, and waxes bold to prescribe to an unprotestant generation.

And for what end bring back the exploded forms of a dark and superstitious age—an age credulous to error, and only hard to be persuaded when spirit and truth are concerned? Is it to act as a barrier against the tide of scepticism now setting in, and threatening to inundate the whole field of revealed truth? But will it be staid by the bulwark they oppose to it, made up as it is of things so superficial and offensive? Surely not. Bent, however, they are upon a religion of attitude and show—a religion that deems itself perfect in proportion to the multitude and exact performance of its ritual prescriptions. But whether the men of form rest in our simpler mode of worship, or addict themselves to the picturesque and imposing observances of Italy or Oxford, it availeth not. They may light their tapers at noon-day, as they do, but it will only serve to display the absence of what our Saviour taught, the woman of

Samaria to regard as the distinguishing characteristics of gospel worship, namely—spirit and truth.

Another class comprehends those who place religion, not in forms, but in *feelings*, with which they are captivated, and in which they are so absorbed, that forms are little regarded, and truth itself not carefully sought. This class is less numerous than the preceding, for the formalist party has always outnumbered the devotees of feeling. Yet as the latter exist as a class, and perhaps a growing one in some quarters, their errors require to be exposed, and so much the more, that they are specious and plausible, not only assuming to be piety, but piety in its most exalted stage of spirituality.

But, on bringing their system to trial, do we find all necessary truth in combination with its transcendental pretensions? No; we even find doctrinal facts of high import and use to sinful man kept out of view, and, where not displaced, greatly overlaid with visionary moods of self-soothing quietism. We find mysticism, doubtless the fairest counterfeit of true piety, and only to be distinguished from it by the application of the strongest scriptural tests—a mysticism which, having attained to a certain class of religion-like sentiments, and in many cases, no doubt, to a certain measure of genuine grace, shuts itself up in passive contemplation of what is within. As if one, having opened a dark chamber, and let in the light of day, should straightway reclose it in the belief that the light within would last without communication with the light of heaven without. By this similitude, may we not inaptly illustrate the mystic's mistake, when he forgets that we live not by sentimental feeling, but by simple faith—that we need perpetual supplies of grace from without, for the obtaining of which we must, with a conscious and a constant reliance, lean on the finished work of Jesus for peace, safety, and acceptance.

No doubt there is in the mystic's system of sanctimonious religion much enjoyment, and much of truth also—truths respecting the necessity of all possible self-annihilation before the everlasting God—the sufficiency and happiness of Divine love, together with the duty and advantage of religious abstraction, and a silent communing with an omnipresent Creator. When these views leave to relative duty, external objects, and instituted forms of worship, their proper estimation, let them receive the respect they are entitled to on the ground of truth. But though some great truths have a place in the system we review, in other points it is grievously deficient; for, conceding, as we do, much truth to it, all essential verities are not there—nay, there is little of Christ in it—little recognition of the necessity of his blood and righteousness, in order to our justification—little celebration of his glorious achievements in the work of redemption—and little direct application, it would seem,



to God our Saviour for the grace of life, and the exercise of his priestly intercession on the sinner's behalf in the presence of the Majesty on high.

The mystic system, at first sight, and to a superficial observer, appears spiritual in the highest degree; and it is only on perceiving how little He who is "the way, the truth, and the life," is regarded in it, that we suspect its spirituality, and begin to ask if that can be sound and acceptable to God which is not in alliance with all revealed truth, and especially with truths that concern the Saviour's kingly offices and work. In the mystic's world of feeling, Christ is not all in all; and what more need we to evince its disagreement with the requisites of true religion shewn us in the text? Were the sun in yonder firmament to be partially eclipsed, and, much more, were the solar orb totally obscured, all nature would be appalled, a chilly horror would spread over the face of things, while every creature would feel a dread uncertainty amid the cold and cheerless gloom. Now, just as Nature mourns the hiding of its enlivening light, so feel we in every system of religion which veils the glory of Immanuel, and teaches men to walk by other light, and live by other life, than that derived by faith from Christ, as all in all.

The religion of feeling is to some minds fascinating and congenial; but if error lurks in it, let us beware. Satan is never more potent to deceive than when he comes as an angel of light; and we believe not a few have been carried away from Christ and salvation by visionary feelings and frames, whom the grosser lusts of the flesh had failed to seduce and undo—their delusion being the more pitiable that it is sincere and, in many of its aspects, holy.

Passing, then, from the religion of form and the religion of feeling, as in different respects inadequate and erroneous, we proceed to what we alone deem worthy to be enforced and honoured—and that is, the religion of *principle*. Attention to form is seemly and necessary, if we would worship God with our bodies at all, as we are enjoined to do; nor is deep emotion foreign from the nature of true piety, for it has in its views of divine and eternal realities, brought to light through the gospel, whatever is fitted to stimulate feeling and raise our better affections to the highest pitch, through the moving power and manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, in the awful concerns of religion, we require something more definite and intelligible than feeling—something in its character fixed and enduring—something, in a word, which, not dependent on bodily sensation, shall remain unaltered and eternal—like a rock in the midst of the sea, which is not moved from its place whether the surging waves around it ebb or flow. Such stability belongs to the power of principle, which, assigning to form and feeling their proper province,

imparts unyielding strength to the whole frame and fabric of an intelligent and truth-built piety.

We know that to worship God in spirit requires a certain degree of religious sensibility, which, whether of a contrite or an exulting kind, will give rise to fervent emotion, which cannot be quenched but by quenching the Holy Spirit, whose influence is in it. He is the Spirit of Truth, however; and therefore spirituality and truth are inseparable—as closely related, we believe, as parent and child; and hence we reckon it but a spurious spirituality which dwells with error, and winks at the loss or absence of truth and principle as not essential to true devotion.

Brethren, it is the religion of principle we this day press upon your notice and adoption. It will be our business to recommend and enforce it every time we appear among you; and, as a preliminary, we bid you this day look at the *pulpit*, look at the *people*, look at the *place* we for the first time assemble in, and see in each of these objects to what extent principle is able to subjugate feeling, trample worldly interests under foot, and subvert time-hallowed customs with a force of decision that sweeps all impediments away. Look, we say, at the *pulpit*; what led us to occupy the position we this moment hold? What but principle—principle that forbade us to prefer quiet and convenience to truth—forbade us to prove faithless to a Divine Master, and to betray his cause, for fear of giving offence to the timid, or provocation to the proud? Principle bade us not to heed the defarations of calumny, with its hundred heads and hundred tongues, all ready to invent or propagate any form of misrepresentation. In a word, when we heard the unambiguous voice of Truth, saying to us, “Follow me,” we arose and left a dwelling we had little thought to quit till exchanged for the house appointed for all living. Nor was it among the lightest of our trials to bid farewell to yonder edifice, which, however, we now regard in the light of a sepulchral monument, sacred to the memory of the past. Urged by principle, we forsook all—but not as one forsaken and alone, as the aspect of this assembly shows; for look, we say, at the *people*, as well as the *pulpit*. To them, too, the call of principle came, nor did it find them unwilling to respond. They too have had their sacrifices to make; and to some of you, ye followers of truth, the sacrifice we know was not small—Small shall any dare to call it? No! Yonder church-yard, bedewed with tears of weeping friends, because the graves of departed relatives would no more be their Sabbath resort, can attest the grief ye felt on leaving the wonted place of worship, hallowed to you by many a touching association connected with the living and the dead. Look, then, we repeat, at the *people*. What will an objector say, are they so numerous that you boast of them? No! we call them not numerous, compared with the general population;

and, taking into account the religious reputation of this parish in former times, we reckon the number small, and disappointing to the expectations of those that know not the prevailing state of religion among us; and had the late memorable event occurred in some former generations, we suppose the people here would have emulated the fine spirit of certain other places, where old and young fled from the contact and oppression of error, as Israel's holy nation did of old flee from Egypt for life and liberty. But though we have nothing to boast of in point of numbers, we have ample cause for thankful recognition of the grace that has been given to so many, in every one of whom a demonstration of the power of principle is held out to the consideration of friends and foes. Brethren, ye did well in following after truth, though it be at the expense of reproach and inconvenience. You have left the mountain where your fathers worshipped. What ye have spent, and what ye shall hereafter expend for Christ's sake, the Lord is able to repay; nor will he suffer himself to be outdone in the way of liberal donation. In the might of principle go forward, and seas of apparent depth and difficulty shall not obstruct your travel heavenward. Have ye been losers hitherto, we ask, by the part ye took? Have the consolations of Christ been sensibly diminished, or have you reason to say that the duties of religion have become more onerous to you, and less productive of spiritual enjoyment, since the day ye took up the position ye now maintain? Nay, brethren, we are bold to answer for you, as we do for ourselves, that never have we had greater freedom and delight in our public engagements in serving the Lord, than have been experienced by us since that period. We are owned of God in this matter, and need not be careful because of man's obloquy and reproach!

Again, if the pulpit and if the people be looked at as proofs of principle, we bid you next look at the *place* we this day worship in for the first time for proof of what eternal principle will devise and do for God and his truth. See the proof of it in this goodly structure, so convenient, capacious, and becoming the uses to which we this day devote it. It might have been erected, at less expense, of coarser materials, and in plainer style. But principle did not confer with worldly prudence either in the first design or after execution: it was for God; and who will deal penuriously with him? It was an illustration of principle, and nobly has it achieved its aim. We bless God for it, while in the name of a grateful congregation, and, as we venture to say, in the name of the Great Head of the Church, we acknowledge the good deed done by the two members of the Church who have accomplished so great an object. As long as it stands, it will be said of it—What hath principle done!

Alas! that our afflicted congregations should have so few doings of

this kind to witness and record ! Instead of expressing sympathy for men of conscience, the great ones of the earth did first deprive the Church of its spiritual liberty and chartered freedom, and next proceeded to interdict every spot of ground within their confines, on which a house of prayer might be built, or a moveable tent erected—as if they might, in the exercise of irresponsible power, issue a decree that neither in mountain nor in desert wilderness should men be allowed to “worship the Father,” though they did it peaceably, “in spirit and in truth.” Is there principle here ? Yes ! such principle as sundry ancient lords exhibited, and which, by the Holy Spirit, has been handed down for the condemnation of all ages—as seen in Daniel iii. 6. What account posterity shall take of these modern measures, we know not ; but who can doubt the verdict of the last day ? Happily, all to whom God hath given great power have not so misapplied it ; and far more pleasant we feel it to commend the deserving than to censure the wilfully wrong, though it may be, they think, in oppressing us, they are doing God a service. Hitherto, we have had little to notice in the form of absolute persecution. The countenance of some, that of old befriended us, and have power to do us harm, is indeed sorely changed ; but liberty of conscience still survives. Menaces indeed are not wanting, and little faith ingloriously inclines to the blast ; but men rooted and grounded in the Truth will stand upright, and refuse to swerve. How pitiable is it when the fear of man casts out the fear of God ! What an infinite error is thus committed in the estimate of things !

We have perhaps dwelt on collateral topics at greater length than may seem consistent with a strict exposition of the text, considered doctrinally. But the occasion and circumstances of the time will, we trust, account for and defend the method we have followed in the foregoing remarks. If we have said more about *man* than about *God*, let us, in conclusion, strive to correct the fault. Alas ! what is man, that the infinite Jehovah should invite his homage, accept his poor celebrations, or even tolerate expressions of love and adoration, which so seldom proceed from a heart purely and profoundly impressed with the genuine sentiments of devotion ? In nothing stand we more in need of a kind and clement Mediator, than when we draw near, as we call it, to a heart-searching God ; for it is an act of creature duty that requires the soul's entire engagement, and failures in it affect the glory of God to an extent that undevout and careless worshippers are little aware of, just because they neither know themselves nor God—that great God, whose manifestations overwhelmed ancient saints and prophets with speechless wonder and awe. Isaiah vi. 1.

Having a place of public worship now prepared for us, let it not only

be frequented, but loved. Be glad when the day of Sabbath rest dawns—glad when the hour of worship arrives—glad to swell the number of willing worshippers—flocking to the house of the Lord, like “doves to their windows.” Breathe after Zion’s assemblies with intense aspirations of desire, crying, like the Psalmist, impatient of hindrance or delay, “When shall I come and appear *before God*.” Come, brethren, as if to meet God in his ordinances, realizing the great object of worship, and come with a direct *intention* of the mind to render unto the *Infinite One* the glory we confess to be his due. Without *intention* to glorify God in our religious duties, they are vain and inefficient shows, which cannot fail to dishonour and be offensive to the Most High. But if we have it in view to offer ourselves and our services to God in the sanctuary, it becomes us to lay to heart what spirituality of frame, what praying in the spirit and for the spirit, is required. If we would be “temples of God,”—not honouring him with our mouths, while our hearts are far from him—we must engage our souls wholly in worshipping him who is a spirit in spirit and in truth. No doubt, in this imperfect state, we cannot always retain the frame we covet; but should a realizing sense of the Divine presence and favour be lost, brethren, ye who have known the Lord, acquiesce not—no, not for a single hour—in spiritual deadness or desertion. Seek to detect the cause of dereliction, and cry for light and revival.

Finally, hold fast the principles of truth that brought you hither. Extenuate no man’s error—partake in no man’s sin. To judge others we are not called; but away with the perversion that justifies want of principle, and palliates defection from Christ, because the treacherous party are admitted to have some virtues, and are reputed wise in their generation. The question of the time is a question of principle—a question involving our allegiance to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords; and to assume that we may worship the Father in spirit and in truth, while we deny supremacy to him whom the Father has truly anointed, and set as king on his holy hill, is a fallacy preposterous as it is fatal to those who fall under its pernicious influence. What remains, then, but that we exhort you, as fellow-citizens of the saints, and as good subjects of our regal Redeemer, to believe his truth, imbibe his spirit, and worship the Father in his name, rejoicing in the persuasion, that Worship is not an incidental duty but an eternal obligation, not a joyless, unmeaning act, but a service of delight—to be resumed in Heaven with nobler powers, and to constitute, we believe, no small portion of Heaven’s conceivable beatitude.—Amen.

## SERMON II.

THE CONSOLATIONS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE BELIEVER, AND THEIR EFFECTS  
UPON HIS CHARACTER.

BY THE REV. JAMES BREWSTER, D.D., CRAIG.

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you,"—1 PETER v. 10.

There is a twofold view of the human race which is universally true, and which is fully descriptive of their present condition, namely, that they are sinful creatures, and that they are suffering creatures. Take any number of individuals, from any country or nation, from any class or condition, from any age or sex, and these two things you may say of them without hesitation, that there is sin in their nature and suffering in their lot. It is painful enough to reflect upon the extent of these evils, as affecting all the children of men, without exception, who have ever lived on this earth; but it is still more afflicting to contemplate the awful height to which they often rise in particular instances, the almost diabolical depravity which some individuals are permitted to reach, and the overwhelming weight of calamity which others are appointed to bear. Let it here be observed, that these are not matters of opinion, but matters of fact in the history of man's present condition, about which there is no disputing; and the great aim of every benevolent and considerate mind should unquestionably be, not so much to comprehend how human beings came to be placed in such a state of sin and misery, but rather to inquire how far any remedy may be found for its accumulated evils. It would evidently avail us very little to know clearly every step and every cause which led on to this sad state of things, unless this knowledge could also show as clearly the way by which we might be brought out of it. Nothing less than such a way of deliverance is the unspeakable benefit proposed to man's fallen race in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel proclaims a sufficient remedy for all his present evils; to those who suffer, it presents an "everlasting consolation;" to those who are sinful, it points out "an everlasting righteousness." It calleth us at once "to glory, to virtue;" and what it principally requireth of every fallen creature for receiving these blessings, is simply to feel truly our need

of them—to feel our misery, and desire to be made happy,—to feel our sinfulness, and desire to be made holy,—to feel our need of both these blessings to be so urgent and extreme, as to be willing to receive them humbly and gratefully, in whatever way it may please the blessed God to bestow them upon his rebellious creatures.

The gospel of our salvation does indeed instruct us also as to the original cause of this our sinful and suffering state, so far, at least, as such knowledge may contribute to further our deliverance from that state. It holds out to us, on the mere principle of our own self-interest, a plain reason for aiming after freedom from all sin, namely, that it is the great cause of all our suffering, and it holds out an equally powerful reason for exercising patience under all such suffering, namely, that it is one great means for correcting our sinfulness. Throughout the whole of its wondrous revelations, it says to fallen man, “hate sin, because it makes you suffer;” and again it says, “take comfort under suffering, because it leads you to see the evil of sin.” All this is distinctly taught in the prayer which, in the words of the text, the Apostle here expresses for the Christian friends whom he is addressing; and the whole passage presents a brief summary of all that concerns our consolation under the trials of the life that now is, and our course of preparation for the blessedness of the life which is to come. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

From these words let us briefly consider,

I. The consolation here set before us,—“called to eternal glory.”

II. The course through which we must pass,—“after that ye have suffered awhile.” And

III. The effects to be wrought out by these consolations and sufferings,—“make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

I. The consolation here set before us,—“God hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”

In such wonderful terms as these it is, that the Word of God ordinarily expresses the blessed remedy, which his infinite mercy hath provided for the evils of man’s fallen state; and you cannot fail to observe how much more they express than a mere relief from such evils. The remedy provided is not merely a call to a state that is free from suffering and sin; for that might have been secured by a very inferior kind of existence, even by an existence incapable either of much evil or much good; but it is a call to a state of actual happiness. Neither is it a call to a state simply of happiness, that is, a state in which every sense and faculty of our nature shall enjoy its proper object, for that happiness may be small

or great according to our power of tasting what is good in itself; but it is a call to a state of positive excellence or holiness. Nor is it merely such a state of excellence or holiness, in which every part of our spiritual nature is raised to its proper perfection, which would assuredly be the utmost attainment that we could well desire to possess; but it is finally, a call to a state which we have no language to describe, nor material of thought to imagine—namely, a state of “glory.” What is this “glory?”—the Scripture name of the heavenly state, expressing not only deliverance from evil, but the enjoyment of good; not only the enjoyment of good, but such a kind of good as is morally excellent; and not only that which is excellent, but the most exalted kind and measure of excellence, namely, the victory, the triumph, “the glory,” the shining forth of spiritual beings in the fullest purity and perfection of which their exalted nature is capable.

There are two additional circumstances here mentioned, which complete the blessedness and excellence of this future and final consolation, namely, that it is an *eternal* blessedness, and that it is such a blessedness as God himself enjoys. It is called “eternal glory.” Its excellence is thus crowned by its being endless. Rarely is it found that the best things in man’s lot are also the most lasting; on the contrary, it is generally the great alloy of every mere earthly excellence and blessing, that it is so uncertain in its tenure, and so transitory in its nature. It is at least the declared deficiency of all the glory of this world, that it “passeth away as the flower of the grass;” while it is the special pre-eminence of the glory here promised, that it “abideth for ever.” But it possesses an excellence still more peculiar and distinguishing, namely, that it is such a glory as God himself enjoys. “He hath called us,” says the Apostle, “unto *his* eternal glory.” Does this expression mean merely that it is *his* possession or property, and so must be *his* gift to us, as the fruit of *his* grace or favour? Or does it mean merely that it is a blessing to be enjoyed in *his* presence, and so that, while enjoying it, we shall be where he is? All this indeed it is; but it is also something more, namely, it is of a similar kind to that glory which forms *his* own blessedness, so that it shall make those who receive it like to God himself. Such a thought as this, it would have been, indeed, the most daring presumption in any created being, and much more in fallen man, to have entertained for a moment; and even, with all that the Divine Word has declared to this effect, it is with the utmost reverence and humility that we should dwell on the amazing thought. But we are explicitly taught that “there are given to us so many exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the *Divine* nature;” and that, “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we



are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." The nearest relationship and resemblance to God himself is always spoken of, as promised to those who are called to his eternal glory. They are called his children and his heirs, members of the body of his Son, and one with him who dwells in the bosom of the Father, according to these remarkable words of the blessed Redeemer himself, "I pray for them, which shall believe on me, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they all may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me;" John xvii. 21-23. Such, in one word, is the glory which is provided as a consolation for all your present evils. It is the same glory which the Son of God himself enjoys; and that to which you are called is, to "see him as he is," to "be like him," to "be for ever with him," to "share his glory," and to "sit with him on his throne." To this we are called, but how shall we reach it? What can we do to become worthy of it? What can we do to be made meet for it? You may call a child to a throne, but what could he make of it? You may call fallen man to eternal glory, but what is there in his nature suitable to such an exaltation? All this difficulty, however, is fully provided for by the way in which you are called—viz, "by Christ Jesus, who is made unto you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." For his sake it is that you receive, and by his help it is that you may attain, the prize of your high calling. He who hath called you is here described as "the God of all grace;" and his mercies are as free as they are infinite, and as sure as they are free. He hath not made a mock of your weakness and misery by proposing to your view a blessing beyond your reach—"a glory," to be beheld at an inaccessible height, exciting your desires, but sinking your hopes. "Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it." "This is the promise which he hath given us, even eternal life," and he hath provided every thing requisite to make the promise good. He hath called you by Christ Jesus, and he requires you only to follow Christ Jesus. Your part chiefly is, really to desire to partake of his eternal glory, and humbly to give yourselves to his heavenly guidance. By the light of his word and by the power of his spirit, if you will only seek them aright, you shall be led in the way to life, and nothing shall be able to separate you from his love, except your own absolute refusal of it. On the contrary, while you really desire to love God, and to be loved by him, all things shall work together for your good: and even your present afflictions, for which so great a consolation

is provided, shall only be made the means of working out for you "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

II. The course through which you must pass, "after that ye have suffered a while." Men have sometimes made it an objection against the goodness of God, that there is so much suffering in this world. This they might do with more reason if they could shew that men are innocent in this world, and deserve no correction, or even that they are willing to be prepared for the happiness of another world, and need no such calls to serious consideration; but, in the present sinful state of fallen man, the very goodness of God requires that there should be suffering. That suffering is indeed, in justice, the punishment for sin, but, at the same time, it is, in mercy, the corrective of our wanderings. The great effect of our original corruption is to turn us away from the eternal Creator to the perishing creature, to make us forgetful of heaven, and to fix our hearts to the earth. The sufferings of this life, therefore, are as messengers of kindness, sent after us in this our vain and perverse pursuit, to rouse our souls from the idle dream, and to recall our thoughts to our real destination. "God hath called us to his eternal glory;" but how little do men naturally care even for eternal glory, so long as they can find their pleasure elsewhere? The very bounties of their Creator unhappily rather drive them to a greater distance from him, instead of drawing them nearer. They take these bounties as their gods, not as gifts from their God; and are willing to rest in them, as all that they wish for here, rather than to be refreshed by them in their journey to a better portion. He needs to wither these comforts, or to interrupt our enjoyment of them, before we can see their insufficiency, and remember the better blessings awaiting us. It is generally, in short, only after we have "suffered a while," that we think of "the eternal glory" to which God hath called us. Even they who do not altogether forget God and his eternal glory, require thus to suffer a while, and should lay their account with doing so, as a part of their necessary preparation for the blessedness of the heavenly state. It is not possible for man's nature to be duly mindful of the eternal glory, or at least to be duly impressed with a sense of its excellence, as long as he sees nothing but sunshine in his present path. However much he may be persuaded from reflection of its absolute value, he cannot fully feel its power as a consolation, till he has suffered under some form of sorrow. As well might you think of enjoying rest without any previous weariness, or of relishing food without experiencing the sensation of hunger, or of rejoicing in the light without having ever been in darkness. It is in suffering also that many of your best spiritual graces can be called forth and kept in exercise; and they only who have suffered

a while can know rightly what it is to sympathize with others who are in adversity, or to submit to God in his dealings with themselves. Patience and resignation, fortitude and self-denial, courage and hope, faith and trust, the raising of the thoughts and affections to things above—these are the proper fruits of affliction, and in no other soil can they be brought to perfection. Such was the Apostle's view of the matter when he said, "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."

You cannot indeed be supposed to wish for afflictions, or to welcome them as your choice. None of them, the Apostle allows, "for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless," he adds, "these very afflictions, which are not joyous, but grievous, yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." This is always your best consolation under them, that they are neither sent idly nor borne uselessly. They not only serve to shew you more clearly the true value of the eternal glory which awaiteth you, but also to prepare your souls the better for its enjoyment. In this view they bring a blessing which compensates for their evil; and when they are thus improved, they are in fact to be regarded properly as means (it may be indeed toilsome and trying means, but still as precious means), of attaining the promised blessing; and so are nothing different from the voluntary sufferings and hardships, which men often undergo in order to gain some present advantage. You may naturally wish to do without them, or at least with as few of them as may be; but, when they do come in your lot, then, as you know the wisdom and goodness of the hand which sends them, your great concern should be to derive from them all the benefit in your power. Were you laid on a bed of sickness or pain, and placed as patients under a physician's care, you would indeed naturally wish to regain your health with as few bitter draughts and painful probings as may be; but still, if truly bent upon your full recovery, and confident in your physician's skill, you would rather welcome than reject what he did decide upon as best and as requisite for your case. So, when convinced that your Father in heaven careth for you, and that he afflicteth, not willingly or causelessly, the children of men, you are called in all reason to consider what he does send, as for your profit, and to strive to turn it to your good. Such is clearly the most salutary as well as consoling view of present suffering, that it may yield an endless benefit. This view falls in with your strongest natural wishes for your own interest. You are grieving, let us suppose, under some loss, calamity, or affliction. You have then not only the general consolation which the gospel proposes in that eternal glory, to which God hath called you, but you have also the satisfaction to think

that some gain or benefit may be drawn from your suffering. It needs not be all pure loss or pain. It may be made to yield some fruit, and that the best of all fruit, by forwarding your fitness for a heavenly inheritance. It has possibly thrown you back in some thing which you hoped for here, but it may be made to carry you forward in your great aim as to what awaits you hereafter. It is against you as to this world, it may be for you as to the next. Balance the matter well. It may be more gain than loss; and you may have just cause to say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Consider, then, this view of your suffering here a while—viz., that you are not only to be comforted under that suffering by the blessed hope of that eternal glory, to which you are called in Christ Jesus; but also, that you are to draw from that very suffering such spiritual good, as may render it even a present benefit. Such is—

III. The effect to be produced both by your consolations and sufferings as Christians—viz. that you may be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled." This, you observe, is the Apostle's prayer for those whom he here addresses, as the result of all their sufferings, that they might so remember that eternal glory to which they were called, and so bear the suffering to which they were appointed for a while, as at length, by the grace of God, to be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled." The full particular meaning of these different expressions may be sought from other passages of Scripture in which they are used: thus you read of "standing *perfect* and complete in all the will of God,"—you read of "the heart being *established* in grace,"—you read of being "*strengthened* with all might by the spirit in the inner man,"—you read of being "*grounded* and *settled* in the faith." We may thus understand the Apostle as praying for these believers, that they might be perfected in every Christian principle and disposition—that they might be established in every good and holy purpose—that they might be strengthened for the fulfilment of every duty—that they might be settled or founded, steadfast and immovable, in the faith and obedience of the gospel. His general meaning at least is clearly this, that they might be complete in every grace which belonged to the Christian character, so as to be fitted for the discharge of every duty in their earthly course, and prepared for the enjoyment of that eternal glory to which they were called. The import of the whole petition is similar to these prayers of the Apostle Paul for other believers,—“The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, and

soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is your completeness as Christians, or what the Apostle calls "presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus," which he here makes the subject of a prayer, and which he thus recommends as your own great object in every stage of your present progress,—in every endurance of present suffering—in every experience of present consolation. Whether you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, or suffer according to the will of God, this is to be your constant aim, and endeavour, and supplication, that, both by such consolations and by such trials, your hearts may be made better, and your spirits made more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." To this end the hope of eternal glory is revealed, that you may raise your thoughts to that heavenly blessedness, and become the more desirous to have your souls purified for its enjoyments. To this end you are appointed to suffer, that you may turn the more gladly to that rest which remaineth, and strive the more earnestly to be purged from every stain of that malignant moral evil which hath made this world the scene of so much misery.

When you think at all, then, of that eternal glory to which you are called, remember what is its nature—viz. that it is the glory which God himself possesses, and that, therefore, to possess it you must become partakers of a divine nature. When you feel the weight of present sufferings, think always what is their use—viz. to wean you from every thing which draws your souls from God; and that, therefore, to derive any future benefit from them, you must here, by their means, be brought nearer to the love of God and of his righteousness. Your hope of glory avails nothing, if it does not give you a more heavenly mind: your suffering here avails nothing, if it does not help to detach you farther from every thing sinful. You must estimate your interest both in God's consolations and corrections by enquiring into their influence in completing your character as Christians, by striving and praying through his grace that they may all contribute to "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

See, then, brethren, the true and leading object to which your aims and supplications should be permanently directed as Christians. It is not what you hope for, it is not what you suffer; but it is what these hopes and these sufferings are making you desire to be, and actually leading you to be. Ask yourselves, indeed, what you know and what you think of the everlasting consolation provided for suffering men in Christ Jesus—your calling to God's eternal glory; for this is the means of raising your souls above the mere movements and motives of this mortal life, and it is most essential to your peace that you have this heavenly hope laid up in your hearts. Ask yourselves, also, what you

know and think of that suffering which belongs to your present condition—as connected in general with your fallen state, at once as its penalty and its corrective,—for this is the view by which you must learn the vanity of created things as a source of happiness, and see the malignity of sin as the blasting of all earthly comforts. But still, however pure your hopes and however just your views, the principal question always must be,—What is ~~the~~ their influence upon your own character and conduct as Christians? what are they doing for your perfection in any devout disposition?—for your progress in any fruit of grace?—for your energy in any prescribed duty?—for your perseverance in all these to the end? “Wherefore, beloved,” says the same Apostle, “seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless.” This is the Apostle’s prayer in the text before us,—his prayer for all to whom his words might come,—that such may be the blessed fruit both of your consolations and of your corrections; and what was his prayer for you should assuredly be your earnest prayer for yourselves; and what is your solemn prayer to God, ought certainly to be your actual, your settled endeavour before God to work out under his blessing. Let this, then, always be your course in reality. At all times, and in all conditions, you are all exposed to many sufferings and sorrows. Take always this Christian view of them,—make always this Christian improvement of them. It is always right and warrantable to endeavour to remove them, and to find relief under them. It is your especial duty, both in regard to your own troubles and in regard to the sufferings of others around you, to consider what may be the direct causes of them, or what may be the proper remedies for them, as far as any remedies may be expected in the good providence of God, or practicable through the help of man. You are always concerned to “remember them that suffer adversity,” and to relieve them and comfort them, if you can, even when they are men clearly “suffering according to the will of God.” But, while you are doing all this, doing all in your power to keep away suffering or to put away suffering from yourselves or others, nevertheless see that you take always the Christian view, and make the Christian use, of whatever befalls you or takes place around you as suffering creatures. Let no man persuade you, in any case, that you suffer this evil or that evil merely through the fault of others; and that, if it had not been for such and such occurrences, or for such and such persons, you would have been free from such and such sufferings. It is your lot, your unavoidable lot, as fallen creatures, that here you must “suffer a while;” and it is often your truest blessing, as “called to eternal glory,” that you here feel the chastenings of affliction from a heavenly Father’s hand. Whoever, then, may be made the means, and wherever may rest, the

blame, remember always that your sufferings are ordered in God's wise and gracious providence, and that they may be improved to your own everlasting benefit. Even when such suffering proceeds most clearly and most directly from some wickedness or weakness of your fellow-creatures, let this be your view of it and your use of it as believers. What, for instance, were the sufferings to which the Apostles so often refer as befalling the believers, whom they addressed in such words as those of the text? Were they not chiefly acts of persecution,—oppressive and bloody persecution, from the hands of men, from the tyranny of their rulers, or the barbarity of the people? Yet how invariably do the Apostles enjoin the disciples of Christ to bear these very trials with all meekness and patience, as coming from God, and at the same time to improve them with all diligence, as designed for their good. Clearly is it your duty to follow the same counsel, and to act in the same spirit, in all cases of affliction or distress, or suffering of any sort. Connect them all with your spiritual progress as Christians. Make them all yield to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. March forward upon them all, and through the midst of them all, as steps even to your eternal glory.

Let it be your full purpose, let it be your fervent prayer, that, whatever ye may suffer, ye shall not suffer as evil-doers; and then, when suffering according to the will of God, “commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator.” “Humble yourselves under his mighty hand, that he may exalt you in due time.” “Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you.” “Watch always, and pray,” lest your great adversary should gain any advantage over you in any of your trials; but, “resisting him steadfastly in the faith,” make it your daily supplication to the God of all grace, who hath called you to his eternal glory, that, after ye have suffered a while, he would make you perfect,—“stablish, strengthen, settle you”—and finally present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

### SERMON III.

THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERINGS, AND HIS SATISFACTION IN THE FRUIT  
OF THEM.

BY THE REV. J. ROXBURGH, A.M., DUNDEE.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."—ISAIAH liii. 11.

THERE are three things to which these words invite our attention. *1st*, The sufferings of Christ, here described as the "travail of his soul." *2dly*, The fruit of his sufferings; "he shall see of the travail," that is, of the effects or consequences of it. *3dly*, His satisfaction in beholding the results of all his pain; "he shall be satisfied."

*1st*, Our attention is invited to the sufferings of Christ; and in respect to them, we are taught that they were not only bodily, but also and chiefly soul sufferings. It was in his inward spiritual anguish—in his conflicts with the wrath of God—in what he endured from the curse of the law and the temptations of the powers of darkness—that the price of the redemption of the elect principally lay. The expression, "the travail of his soul," farther indicates the greatness and extremity of his sufferings. The word is employed to express the highest degree of endurable agony, for example, the pains and groans of creation under the curse.

In order that we may arrive at even the most faint and remote conception of the indescribable sorrow and heaviness of the Saviour, it is necessary for us to have our mind impressed with the doctrine of Scripture regarding the constitution of his person. We are too apt ignorantly to conclude, that to him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily, nothing could be a difficulty, nothing could cost a struggle—that his omnipotence must have borne him onward above the power of pain, and grief, and distress—and that, if his apparent sufferings were not altogether unreal, they must to him at least have been trifling and contemptible. Now, it is to be remembered that, while he was truly God, co-eternal and co-essential with the father, he was at the same time complete and perfect man, possessed of a true body and a reasonable soul—a soul of the most exquisite sensibility, and susceptible of the most painful impressions from every form of evil. The union of the two natures in his one person was without confusion of their properties. Notwith-



standing the union, the natures remained distinct, and their operations distinct. Neither his original dignity as the Son of God, nor the union of the Divine nature with the human, nor the sacred distinction attending his birth, furnished the slightest ground to doubt his absolute participation of our nature and actual communion with us in all our sufferings. In the body, he was liable to hunger, and thirst, and weariness, as much as any of us. He was capable of being bruized with stripes, torn with scourges, pricked with thorns, pierced with nails, transfixed with a spear. So also his soul was endued with the same faculties and affections as ours. He was moved with pity and compassion. He was stung with reproach and ingratitude. He was susceptible of affliction, and disturbance, and agony. He was devoid of no property that belongs to us. He was free only from the contamination that adheres to our corrupted nature. Such was the depth of humiliation, such the capacity of suffering, to which he stooped who was the Lord of nature and fountain of life, the eternal partaker of the Father's happiness, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person.

Now, as has already been said, his sufferings were chiefly soul sufferings. His anguish was mental anguish. It arose from moral and spiritual considerations, rather than from the cruel inflictions of his persecutors. He that killeth only the body could do little to produce that dejection which he discovers in his agony. There was a power beyond this at work. There was a province of pain to which it could not reach. "The iron entered into his soul." It was there the bitterest part of his afflictions was endured, and he tasted the essence of unutterable sorrow. Soul trouble is in its very nature more heavy and overwhelming than bodily. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Our Lord's bodily tortures were not without a parallel, but the pangs he endured in his soul were; and this is the only explanation that can be given of his indescribable grief, and anxiety, and dismay, in the day when he became a sacrifice for sin. History furnishes accounts of saints and martyrs, who, animated by the faith and hope of the gospel, have endured bodily pain as severe and as prolonged as that of Christ, not only without any of those expressions of peculiar amazement and grief to which he gave utterance, not only with the most unflinching resolution, but even with triumph and exultation. The apostles joyed in tribulations the most unexampled. We read of those who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection"—who, under all the multiplied miseries that were heaped upon them, exhibited a patience, a constancy, a cheerfulness, which provoked their blood-thirsty enemies to the last degree of cruelty—and yet even that, though it forced the reluctant spirit to quit its

earthly tenement, could not daunt their courage, could not shake their resolution. These were disciples of Christ; and yet Christ himself appears, though not inconstant, yet dejected and desponding in his sufferings, and sadly racked with anxiety and amazement. The reason is, they had sources of spiritual consolation that enabled them to smile on death in its most formidable shape; whereas he had sources of mental anguish which pointed every sting, and magnified every gloomy feature of that king of terrors. Indeed, in all the representations of his sufferings, whether contained in the prophetic or apostolic writings, there is a pressure of agony, a mysterious sorrow, a terrible and unknown conflict of soul, which is inconceivable by our minds. Language labours to give us even a glimpse into it; and the very sight of its outward expression seems to have overwhelmed the Disciples, for "when Jesus had risen up from prayer, and was come to them, he found them sleeping for sorrow."

But although we cannot measure the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the Redeemer's agony, we can discover some of the reasons of it, and these it is profitable to ponder in our heart. We cannot estimate the bitterness of his tears, but we may comprehend in some faint degree what caused them to flow; and that we may be prepared to enter into the consideration of this subject, it is needful that we carry along with us right views of the holiness of Christ's human nature, in which all his sufferings were endured. His spiritual perceptions were not darkened, nor his moral feelings blunted, as they are even in the best men, by the influence of natural corruption or the remaining power of sinful habits. There was not a cloud upon his understanding to obscure its spiritual vision; his will did not decline in one particular from the perfect rule of rectitude,—had no wish but what was agreeable with the will of his Father; his conscience was most tender and sensitive; his affections pure and unstained. In all the faculties of his soul he was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Such a being must have been sensibly affected with all the evils attending his passion, in a measure far beyond what any other man was capable of. No one could have felt, no one ever did feel, pain, and grief and shame as he did, so that we may truly apply to him the words of the prophet, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow; wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." His spotless soul was capable of a full view of the awful malignity and hatefulness of sin, and alive to a sense of its exceeding sinfulness. He could appreciate the disorder and confusion it has introduced into the creation of God. He could feel the abhorrence with which its pollution is fitted to affect a soul that has never yielded to its power. He could estimate the

real extent of its fearful and endless consequences, the magnitude of the curse due to it, the accumulated guilt of a world lying in wickedness. His sense of human misery, too, was most exquisite; his sympathy with it tender beyond conception. He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that the more, that, though tempted in all points like ourselves, he was without sin. His benignity, his mercy and compassion, were pure, perfect, and untainted; not as they exist in our depraved and hardened hearts.

Now we are to conceive, in the *first* place, of the effect on such a soul of the inward temptations of the powers of darkness, in the utmost violence of their fury. To conceive of it indeed is scarcely possible. This, however, we know assuredly, that no small part of the pain endured by the Saviour was from a dreadful conflict with the great enemy of man. "Now," said he, in reference to his approaching death, "now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When the event drew nearer, he exclaimed, "The prince of this world cometh;" and when his apprehension took place, he said to the chief priests and others, "This is your hour, and the hour of the power of darkness." Besides the rage of his visible enemies, therefore, he had to sustain the furious onset of Satan and his emissaries. He grappled in dark encounter with infernal intelligences. There was a cup of deadly sorrow mingled by hands invisible to us, but not unseen by him. While there was desertion on the part of heaven, there was mockery in hell. In what particular way Satan was permitted to try him we are not told; but we may readily imagine that his temptations must have consisted chiefly of suggestions to abandon his undertaking, motives to despair or repent of it, urged with all the energy of a dying effort, with a cunning and force quickened by the consideration that his all was at stake, and that upon the result would depend the stability and enlargement, or the overthrow of his hellish empire. And the malice of men furnished a ready argument to the subtilty of devils. For why should Christ seek deliverance for them who were seeking to bind and destroy him? Why should he so love them who hated him with such deadly rancour? Why shed his innocent blood for those who could cry, "his blood be upon us and on our children?" O here was the triumph of a Saviour's love that it could find an answer to such an argument as this, seconded and enforced by all the artifices of the arch-deceiver! Herein was his boundless love manifested, that, while we were yet enemies, he died for us.

A *second* element of that agony of soul which the Redeemer experienced, was the suffering that arose from a full view of the evil of sin, and the accumulated guilt for which he was about to atone. He bore the burden of the sins of a guilty world. As he has said in the mystical

Psalm, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart faileth me." It was this burden pressing upon him that made him sore amazed and very heavy. It even communicated an exquisite bitterness to his bodily pains. These were part of his satisfaction for sin, and in their intensity he could read the inherent hatefulness and immense evil of that for which he had engaged to satisfy. The more his body was racked by the punishment of sin, the more did his soul perceive of its malignant nature, and was filled with holy horror at the contemplation. The more his visible enemies raged, the more did he see of the frightful effects of rebellion against God, of the odiousness and power of sin, and that sin imputed to, and resting upon himself. We observe this illustrated in some degree in the experience of those to whom has been given any measure of spiritual discernment—as when the child of God is called to endure in his own person the distresses and trials which sin has brought into the world, or to mark its debasing and destructive effects in the scenes of degradation and misery with which he is surrounded. If your mind be rightly exercised in these circumstances, you will ascend from the stream to the fountain-head—from the misery you experience or observe to the principle of it, to wit, the alienation of your nature from God—and hence will you derive clearer and more enlarged conceptions of the malignant and desolating power of sin. On this principle, our Lord's views of its evil desert must have extended in proportion as his bodily afflictions increased in number and severity. Every fresh pang was traced to its cause, the curse he had engaged to remove, and threw new light on the weight and oppressiveness of that curse. The cup of Divine indignation grew more bitter the nearer it was to being exhausted. The darkness grew thicker and thicker as he approached the gates of death; and when the sorrows of death itself compassed him, it was not its gloomy visage, from which our nature so instinctively revolts—it was not its unknown terrors, its untried agonies—it was not these that made his soul exceeding sorrowful. No! "the sting of death was sin." "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul."

A *third* cause of the travail of the Saviour's soul was the hiding of his Father's countenance. The darkness of the sky above him, while the earth under him quaked, and the rocks, and the vail of the temple, were rent, and the graves opened,—this was an emblem of the state of his soul, deserted by God,—all sensible influences of light and comfort and glory from the Divine nature suspended,—no sympathy for

him expressed on the part either of heaven or earth. Hence the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He had said before of his disciples deserting him, "Yet am I not alone, because the Father is with me;" but now he was alone—he was deprived of the consolations of the Father's gracious presence. The suffering arising from this cause could be known only by him who endured it; yet some conception may be formed of it from what the believer suffers when in a state of spiritual desertion. What are outward troubles to him so long as the consciousness of the Divine presence irradiates his soul, and the candle of the Lord shines upon his head! But take from him this source of comfort, and you leave him in a state of desolation the evils of which the utmost worldly prosperity cannot alleviate. Look to the case of Job, when he exclaimed, "O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?" If the child of God who has once tasted that the Lord is gracious, thus groans under the loss of his favour, O what must that loss have been to the holy human soul of Christ, who had been daily the delight of the Father, and had rejoiced alway before him.

But the Saviour had to endure not only the desertion, but the wrath of the Father. The Lord's anger against sin was vented against him, the substitute of sinners. "He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." Hence the cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was the full cup of the Father's wrath then put into his hand. Jesus was thus learning what the anger of an infinite God means. He had the curse due to all the elect to encounter; and the debt he had engaged to pay was exacted from him to the uttermost farthing by awful and unbending justice, and that the justice of a Father, whose beloved son he was in whom he was ever well pleased. This gave an inconceivably bitter relish to the cup. God's Word declares, "that the soul that sins shall die;" that "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It was this curse Christ undertook to bear. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us. He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He placed himself in the room of sinners—of all the sinners for whom he engaged: he undertook to satisfy for all their sins; and thus the curse due to every one of his innumerable progeny, and which, but for his

gracious interposition, would have descended unmitigated, and been drawn out in every instance the length of eternity, was in his case compressed into one draught, and drunk up at once. If the frown of an earthly father will send a sudden chill through the heart of his child, and damp the gayety of his spirits—if the alienation of an earthly friend will cause you the most anxious disturbance, and fill your soul with melancholy reflections—if one drop of God's wrath in a cup otherwise full to the brim with the elements of happiness, will turn all into gall and wormwood—O what inexpressible anguish, what inconceivable terrors, must have been awakened in the filial bosom of the Redeemer in that hour and power of darkness ! O that we would learn from the contemplation of his unknown agonies what an evil thing sin is—what intolerable misery is the fruit of it under the government of a holy God !—the Divine justice, how uncompromising !—the Divine wrath, how terrible !—the love of Christ, how boundless and unconquerable !—and the value of that salvation of which we think so lightly, but which cost the affectionate Saviour an amount and variety of soul-travail of which it will take us eternity to estimate the burden !

But the travail of Christ's soul is now past, and we come to meditate on the causes of his joy. The promise is, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." "The Spirit of Christ testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Now, the fruit of his sacrifice included three things : *first*, the glory that should accrue to the Father from the new splendours reflected on all the perfections of his character by the work of human redemption ; *secondly*, the reward that should accrue to the Saviour himself, his personal exaltation, mediatorial authority, his Father's approbation, and the blessings of countless millions ransomed by his blood ; *thirdly*, the benefit that should accrue to his people, the blissful change produced upon their condition, character, and prospects—children of wrath snatched from hell, servants of corruption rescued from their debasing servitude, rebels against God subdued by the sweet influence of his grace, cleansed from all moral defilement, arrayed in the beauties of holiness, purified, refined, ennobled, rendered worthy associates of unfallen angels, and made to people heaven, who, but for Christ's interposition, must have been the tenants of hell. This last is the cause of his satisfaction specially referred to in the text. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."

Hence we are reminded, in the first place, that he shall have a nume-

rous progeny,—so many as fully to satisfy him for all his pains. “He bare the sins of many.” His reward shall be abundant. Few, indeed, in particular ages of the Church—few compared with the numbers of the ungodly—in this light, a little flock; but many, when gathered from all ages and climes since the world began. “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” “I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” “The people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness; from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth.” How numerous the drops of dew that fall from the morning womb, and glitter upon a single stalk of corn in the rays of the early sun! How countless over a whole field white unto harvest! But the children begotten to Christ through the power of his gospel shall exceed in number, as well as brightness, those early gems that spangle the lawn and drop upon the pastures of the wilderness. His seed shall be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude.

This effect of Christ's sufferings, we are next reminded, is infallibly certain. “He *shall* see of the travail of his soul.” “All that the Father hath given to him shall come to him”—not one of them shall be amissing; and wherever a good work has been begun, it shall be carried on to the day of complete redemption. Neither men nor devils can rob Christ of his recompense. When the season of conversion comes to any man, the corruptions of nature can no longer hold out against that spiritual and Divine power by which he is sweetly moved. The natural blindness of the understanding yields to the heavenly illumination,—the natural reluctance of the will to the heavenly persuasion,—and the heart with its affections is inclined to the spiritual love of Divine things.

A change so gracious and glorious in so numerous a spiritual progeny, and the accompanying change from the depth of wretchedness to unmingled and unending happiness, fills the holy and benevolent soul of the Redeemer with delight. It may provoke the hostility of the world, but when Christ sees it, he is satisfied. He thinks all his labour and sorrow well bestowed. He is recompensed for all his pains and sufferings, and grudges not a single pang. It fills him with complacency and joy, which are shared by all the host of heaven. “There is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” He is satisfied, as the gladdened father was when his prodigal son came again under his roof, and

his return was made an occasion of mirth and festivity to the whole household. He is satisfied, as the shepherd was who "went after the sheep that was lost until he found it, and when he found it, laid it on his shoulders rejoicing, and when he came home, called together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." Even so, the recovery of every wanderer from the paths of sin and death, and his entrance into the fold where are life and light and peace and holiness and perfect safety, strikes a chord in the breast of the Saviour, to which there is an instant response from all the bright array of blessed spirits, and "there is joy in heaven." The Redeemer, for joy that another heir of immortality is born, remembers no more his former sorrow, his many struggles, and long labours, and formidable difficulties. And what kind of happiness, think you, must that be which fills and satisfies the divine mind of Christ? How stupendous, how worthy of God, must that be which causes it, embracing all other grand occasions of extraordinary joy and festivity! It is the work of redemption beheld in all its precious fruits, and in its sublime consummation, that has this effect. And what, then, must be the unspeakable worth of the human soul, the salvation of which is accounted of so much importance in heaven! And what must be the grandeur of redemption in the view of angelic intelligences, the issue of which heightens their felicity, and fills the immensity of the Saviour's mind! Ah, brethren, of what do the most of us think so little as of our souls, and what are we so ready to barter for the meanest indulgence? What do we value so light as salvation? What distresses us so little as sin? What makes us tremble so little as hell? What so little invites our desires and pursuit as that holiness without which no man shall see God? O the fallacy of human sense! O the vanity of carnal judgment! O the incurable thoughtlessness of man! Those things which are to you light as feathers in the balance against the possessions and pleasures of the world, were the occasion of the Saviour's soul-travail. From them his satisfaction is now derived; and, though unheeded by us, they are things into which the angels desire to look.

It may help us to rise to the height of spiritual contemplation to which this theme invites us, to consider, in conclusion, when this sight and satisfaction are enjoyed by Christ. And here we observe, that he saw of the fruit of his travail from all eternity. It was his inducement to undertake the work of redemption. This was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame. He delighted in the anticipation of what he beheld in distant vision—that this man and that man should be born again—that in this and that place such and such poor sinners should be called by his grace, delivered from the thralldom of



Satan, redeemed, regenerated, and brought to glory. In reference to the joy he derived from this prospect, even before the heavens were prepared, or a compass set upon the face of the deep, he is said to have "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and to have had his delights with the sons of men." His sufferings were not hid from his view, but neither were his triumphs. He saw from afar sin condemned, sinners rescued, the law magnified, God glorified, hell confounded. "A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years."

He saw of the travail of his soul in the very time of enduring that travail; and it was the sight of the blessed consequences that armed him with courage and constancy as he proceeded on his doleful way, and reconciled him to the extent and bitterness of the sufferings through which the redemption of his people was to be accomplished. His eye reached forward beyond the anguish and ignominy of his crucifixion to the glorious issue of it—to the company of the redeemed gathered as a rich harvest from his death; and beholding them returning to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, the sight of their happiness as the fruit of his pain, carried him unhesitatingly through his fearful fight of afflictions. He declined deliverance, though he could have commanded it. "He set his face like a flint." "He hid not his face from shame and spitting." Nay, anticipating the victories of his grace and the triumphs of his gospel, he even longed for the coming of the hour when he should be delivered up. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." On the cross his victory began. When he fell he triumphed; principalities and powers were made a show of openly. He procured the forgiveness of sin by being numbered with transgressors. He opened a way of reconciliation by submitting to the treatment of an outcast. He abolished death by dying.

He saw of the travail of his soul on his ascension, in the pouring out of his spirit, as the consequence and evidence of his exaltation, and in the conversion that followed of three thousand in one day, as the first-fruits of that harvest of souls which he has ever since been gathering in. With what complacency must the eye of the newly-risen Saviour have rested on the delightful scene, when "the disciples continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. And were daily in the temple with one accord, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And when the churches had rest, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

He sees now of the travail of his soul in every sinner that is converted by

the preaching of his truth, and in every saint that is edified and built up in his holy faith. Every new convert is a fresh accession to his victory—another brand snatched from the burning, recovered from the horrors of hell, and elevated to the purity and bliss of heaven. The pollution and misery of that hell, and the holiness and happiness of that heaven, we cannot now fully estimate—but the Saviour can; and the transition of each redeemed spirit from the one to the other fills his benevolent soul with a new and sublime satisfaction. And this satisfaction is increased by every victory you obtain in your spiritual warfare, every step you advance in your heavenward journey. Every sin you renounce—every grace you cherish—every conquest you secure over your temper, your inordinate affections, your corrupt desires—is marked by his diligent eye, and is a cause of joy to your glorified Saviour.

He shall see more largely of the travail of his soul when his people shall have sent forth his gospel into all nations, and it shall have been blessed for the conversion of the whole heathen—when the corn of wheat that has fallen into the ground and died, shall bring forth much fruit, and the handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains shall shake with fruit like Lebanon for abundance. Now, we anticipate the period when the entire world shall be recovered to an acknowledgment of the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and when the spiritual reign of truth and piety shall be unlimited. For the whole earth is to be filled with his glory. The little leaven is to leaven the whole lump. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord, and he shall reign for ever. The stone cut out without hands is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. The doom of every Pagan temple is pronounced. The debasing influence of idolatry shall everywhere yield to the renovating force of Christian truth, and the pollutions of heathenism disappear before the extended empire of Immanuel. When this time comes, as come it shall, it will be the fruit of the Redeemer's sacrifice, and will add even to the sum of his felicity. And what benevolent spirit, looking to the present debased state of the world, would not rejoice when every solitary place is gladdened with the voice of the gospel—and the earth yields her increase—and God, even our own God, doth bless us—and the Christian graces blossom like the rose of Sharon, where now the spiritual wilderness stretches out in dreary monotony—and “the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And there shall be nothing to hurt nor to destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Finally, Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul at the consummation

of all things ;—at the Resurrection, when his purchased possession shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and “ this corruptible shall put on incorruption—this mortal, immortality—and death shall be swallowed up in victory ;”—on the Day of Judgment, when he shall stand before the Father at the head of his ransomed people, and shall say, “ Lo, here am I, Lord, and the children whom thou hast given me ;”—throughout Eternity, when his prayer will be fulfilled—“ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.” Then shall the ransomed of the Lord shine radiant with robes made white in the blood of the Lamb and illuminated with the light of God’s approving countenance, and the song of redemption shall be heard in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. O how delightful to the Saviour, after all his soul-travail, to see his spiritual progeny thus safely brought to a state of love and union with him in his everlasting kingdom, and the Church gathered to its rest ! He shall remember no more the anguish for joy at the sight of so many precious souls recovered from perdition, and exalted to a condition of unspeakable dignity and happiness. Those countless thousands he will contemplate with infinite complacency as the fruit of his pain, and reciprocal love and joy will fill the heart of himself and people throughout an endless eternity. To release a poor suffering debtor from prison, and restore him to the comforts of his home—to snatch a drowning man from the jaws of death—to ransom a fellow-citizen from what was deemed a hopeless captivity—how does the instrument of blessing, in such a case, sympathize with the delight of the person blessed ! What a pure and generous happiness is felt in contemplating the results of one’s sacrifices or exertions ! Go to the bereaved mother, or wife, or children, mourning the loss of him whom they never expect to see again : view the desolate hearth—a family deprived of its solace and support ! Go back again to that scene when the ransomed captive has returned : mark the light and joy that have revisited the dwelling, and beam in every face—the aged parent revived by seeing again her child before she die—the tears of the wife and mother dried up—the little children happy once more in the protection of a restored father—I say, there is no man capable of right moral feeling who can look upon such a scene without being overpowered by a tide of tender emotion. But there is a change more grateful still to the enlightened, benevolent spirit of a Christian. It is when the slave of passion, with brutalized understanding, reveling in debauchery, and sunk in vice and apathy, is arrested in his downward career—is brought to call upon his God, and submit to the power of the truth, and walk in blessed light and immortality, the heir of an unfading inheritance—when the accents of devotion are heard from the

lips that vented profanity and blasphemy—and the ravening and roaring lion is converted into the meek and gentle lamb of the Redeemer's flock. If the first of these changes, which terminates with this short life, and the joy of which, death may soon overcast, nevertheless fills even the unrenewed man with delight—if the second, only in a single case, is a cause of wonder and praise to the believer, narrow as his capacity is, and imperfect his spiritual perceptions and feelings—O what a divine satisfaction must the repetition of it in unnumbered cases communicate to the infinite mind of Christ, with all its boundless benevolence, and its quick sense of human misery, and its generous interest in whatever promotes the glory of God and the good of undying souls!

1. Behold from this subject the amazing grandeur of the work of redemption, the worth of the soul, the preciousness of salvation, the costliness of the price paid for it, and cease to wonder that God has chosen the Church as that by which to make known his manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places.

2. Ye who are living impenitent and unbelieving under the means of grace, unawakened, unconverted, unsanctified, behold in the travail of the Redeemer's soul the extent of the curse due to sin—a curse which must descend unmitigated on your own head, if you find no saving interest in his redemption—and which, in your case, will prove a curse long as eternity. O would you wish to be absent on that day when Jesus will gather his saints from the four winds of heaven? Would you wish to experience what the everlasting destruction of the soul from the presence of God means? If not, seek to be numbered among his people now; and remember you cannot, by your unbelief, rob him of his reward. His kingdom shall advance in spite of you and your preference of the paltry and pitiful gratifications of this world. His recompence is certain and infallible. And though, by your infatuated neglect of your eternal interests, you are not of the number of his spiritual progeny, he shall nevertheless see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. The infinite loss will not be his; it will be your own.

3. Ye who are indeed the people of Christ, redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Saviour's body and the travail of his tender soul, what, in equity and gratitude, do you owe him for his generous interest in your happiness? If love should ever beget a corresponding kindness, can the devotion of your lives, your time, your talents, and your substance, be at all an adequate requital of his unparalleled friendship? Study to increase his satisfaction by seeking the daily renewal of your spirits, the daily crucifixion of your lusts and passions, and a daily growing conformity to his lovely

image. Let him see the fruit of his pain in your devotedness to his service, and your continued advancement in grace and godliness. Let your communion with him be constant. And remember that, though now in glory, he is not an indifferent spectator of your conduct. His eye is upon you. He still suffers when any portion of his Church suffers from sin and backsliding, and still rejoices when it prospers and flourishes. Your soul is daily visited by the master of the vineyard. Let his heart be rejoiced by daily finding on it more fruit. And as you are his disciples, bear in mind, as an important branch of practical godliness, that he has a claim to your substance as well as to your person ; and while lukewarm professors are sitting at ease, and refuse to deny themselves the most trifling indulgence, let a large portion of your means be employed in sending forth his gospel, and spreading his truth from pole to pole. Bring presents, and offer gifts, that the nations may be glad and sing for joy—that men may be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed. Every other use to which you can apply your substance will perish with those perishable bodies on which you lavish so much of your care. But even the widow's mite, willingly spent in the cause of Christ, derives importance from the grandeur of the object to which it is devoted. It is a contribution toward the accomplishment of his great design, which fills and satisfies the Saviour's soul, when his glorious name shall be blessed for ever, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen.

## SERMON IV.

MOSES A TYPE OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JOHN FORBES, D.D., LL.D., GLASGOW.

"According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord spake unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."—DEUT. xviii. 16, 17, 18.

That this prophecy relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, who sustains to his Church the threefold office of a Prophet, a Priest, and a King, may be made to appear in the most decisive and unquestionable manner from evidence both external and internal. In other words, we have the testimony of inspired Apostles so applying it; and we have also, in the terms of the prophecy itself, sufficient data for applying it exclusively to him, and to no one else. Thus, in that address which Peter delivered to the Jews, who crowded around *him* and John, in consequence of the miracle of healing the lame man, who was wont to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and which you find in the 3d chapter of Acts, he says at the 19th verse, after ascribing the power by which the miracle was wrought to Christ, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord: and he shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." But as if to render the authority for applying the prophecy to Christ still more decisive and undoubted, you have also the proto-martyr Stephen, another inspired man, in the 7th chapter, in his address to the Jewish council, making the same application of it to Christ, and thereby shewing them that, whatever they might think, Moses,

of whom they made their boast, distinctly acknowledged and foretold the claims of Jesus, and commended him to their reverence and confidence—verse 37, “This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.” Thus, according to that principle of the law, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be confirmed, had the Jews the concurring testimony of two inspired servants of God to convince them that this remarkable prophecy—remarkable whether as regards him who delivered it, or him to whom it referred—was accomplished in that day in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who was of their brethren according to the flesh, but who was also the Son of God in respect of his Divine nature; and who, as the mediator of the new covenant, was entitled to receive the same or even greater deference and obedience to his will than Moses.

But it is of the nature of all true prophecy, that it bears in itself the evidence of its own fulfilment, arising from the coincidence between its announcements and the specific persons or events whom it foretells. And, instead of requiring authority accordingly to support its truth, it is fitted to give authority to revelation in general, and to demonstrate that it derives its source from Him who is the author of all wisdom, and who alone seeth the end from the beginning. It is, therefore, our duty to investigate in all such cases the several points of agreement which exist between a prophecy and its fulfilment, that in the light of the latter we may discern the truth of the former. On the ground thus stated, accordingly, let us proceed to examine the particular prophecy before us, in connection with the prophetic office of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to discern in what respect it applies to him, with a speciality which admits only of this and of no other application. Many prophets, you well know, were raised up in Israel, in an intermediate line between Moses and Christ, and among them were some scarcely if at all inferior to Moses in the plenitude of the prophetic Spirit by whom they were inspired, or in the miraculous gifts by which they manifested that they acted with Divine authority and power. By what indication, then, are we to distinguish that it was to none of these that Moses bore testimony in the text; so that, after they had all passed away, the prophecy before us indicated that there was one still awaiting, before the sacred line should close, in whom it might receive its accomplishment? We may naturally anticipate that, in directing our attention to this inquiry, it cannot fail to present us with some peculiar and pre-eminent excellence, connected either with the manner in which Christ exercises his prophetic office, or with the end for which he sustains it, or both; and that thus at one and the same time, the coincidence in question shall

both impart confirmation to our belief in the Word of God, and exalt our love and esteem for the person and work of the great prophet, whose peculiar merits we are led to contemplate.

Some of you are aware that the history of Moses and of Christ abounds in a variety of circumstances, which bear a remarkable resemblance, and which admit of a striking parallel being drawn between them, at once of an instructive and pleasing nature. Thus, Moses would not be corrupted nor detained from God's work, and from the cause of his people by the greatest enticements that the world afforded, viz., the promotions, profits, and pleasures of Egypt: Christ left the glory of heaven to redeem the Church, as it is written, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." The enemies of Israel caused the life of Moses to be exposed to great danger, so that his preservation formed a remarkable instance of Providential kindness: Christ also, when yet an infant of days, was cruelly sought to be destroyed by the jealousy and malignity of Herod, and was saved from the indiscriminate massacre of the children of Bethlehem, by a supernatural call given to Mary and Joseph to carry the young child down to Egypt. Such was the courage of Moses that neither the pride nor the threats of Pharaoh could move him from standing to his duty, and fulfilling the commission which God had assigned him: In like manner, Christ was not terrified by the plots and practices of the priests, and scribes, and rulers of the Jews, but spake openly in the temple and in the synagogues, and boldly denounced the blindness, hypocrisy, and wickedness of his enemies. Moses was so exceedingly meek that all the murmuring and opposition of a rebellious and ungrateful people did not keep him from seeking their good: Christ also endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and, in his prayer upon the cross for his enemies, gave an instance of his unconquerable loving-kindness and mercy. Moses faithfully delivered all things that were given him in charge, whether they were great or small, pleasing or displeasing to the people: Christ thus saith of himself to the Father, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest unto me. I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it." Moses envied not the gifts which God bestowed upon others, but desired that all the people might be prophets: Christ communicated to his Apostles divine power, and appointed them to be fellow-workers with himself, and he could say to the Father, "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." Moses had respect to every one in the congregation of Israel, whether princes or people, great or mean, and was no respecter of persons: In Christ all are one, both Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. In fine, Moses, with a holy zeal, was careful for the interests of posterity,



and the welfare of unborn generations: Christ, with an all comprehensive wisdom and love, established ordinances of standing obligation in the Church, and provided for the transmission of the light of salvation to the latest ages; whilst in his intercessory prayer, he bore upon his heart the whole of his people who should ever dwell upon the earth.

But we do not conceive that we would be warranted in founding upon these, or upon any similar traits of resemblance, that coincidence between Moses and Christ, which renders the prophecy before us specially and distinctively applicable to none except the latter. There is something too significant and weighty in the language employed, to be understood as sufficiently fulfilled by any particulars, except they be of such a nature as not to be paralleled, but in the case of the Jewish legislator and the Christian Messiah. Now, it may direct us to ascertain what these are, to attend particularly to what is stated in the 16th verse—"According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." From this it is manifest that the special resemblance which is indicated as to subsist between Moses and the prophet announced, was this—that, like Moses, on the solemn occasion referred to, at the dispensation of the law at Horeb, the prophet whom the Lord their God was to raise up would come between a holy God and a guilty people; and, by negotiating between them, would remove that fear and dread from their minds, which caused them that they could not bear to think of having to appear before him again without the most overwhelming anguish, and the impression that they must die.

Now, that this applies exclusively to Christ and to no other prophet, is manifest to all who are acquainted with the Scriptures. If we take Isaiah for an instance, one in many respects of the most eminent of the prophets, so far was he from being qualified for coming between a holy God and guilty men, that we find him overwhelmed with fear and conscious guilt in the Divine presence, and unable to bear the sight of the glorious vision until he received the assurance of forgiveness. Chapter vi. verse 1—"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts."

In regard, therefore, to the honour conferred upon Moses of being a mediatorial prophet—that is, a prophet who had access to God, and the power of standing before the glory of his holiness with acceptance, and of revealing God's will to Israel in a gracious manner which they were able to bear—there was never any like him in the line of succeeding prophets, until Christ came. Now, as this is a peculiar ground of coincidence, it both distinguishes Christ, and at the same time infinitely commends him to our acceptance. It constitutes an indication at once discriminating and glorifying. It both shows us who he is, and also what he is. It separates him from all else who were ever honoured to bear the prophetic office; and it exalts and commends him as eminently suited to the end for which he is required.

But whilst Moses was a mediatorial prophet, he was so in a manner infinitely inferior to him whom he seemed to typify and prefigure in that respect. In the presence of the awful manifestation of the Divine majesty, power, and holiness, which was exhibited from Mount Sinai, at the dispensation of the law, he betrayed the weakness of man in his best estate, when standing before the holy Lord God, and, as the Apostle states, “did exceedingly fear and quake.” It was not, therefore, from any inherent righteousness or strength that he came to be sustained at last, that he could meet with God, and transact with him as he did, without trepidation or dismay. But he must have attained to this through faith in the merits of that Divine Redeemer whom he announced to the Israelites as a Prophet who was to be raised up like unto himself; and thus from Christ was derived that boldness and access to God in which he so eminently resembled him. Just as an image, when reflected, is not only an indication of the object which it shews, but owes its existence to it, the Jewish Prophet was indebted to Christ for those very qualities in which he represented him to the knowledge of men. For, had not Christ obtained grace for Moses, he could not have come unto the presence of God as he did; and therefore he could not have become a type, as he was, of Christ himself, through whom all who believe are justified and have power to draw near to God without wrath and without fear.

That peculiar and pre-eminent excellence which thus distinguishes Christ is the subject, as it deserves to be, of frequent allusion, and of express doctrinal testimony, throughout the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament. Isaiah evidently refers to it in the 32d chapter at the 2d verse, when describing the security and blessedness of Christ's people, he says of him, “a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” More unendurable than the

most piercing and scorching rays of an eastern sun to an unprotected traveller, is the operation and power of the infinite justice and holiness of God on the mind of an awakened transgressor. He feels conscience-struck and dismayed as he thinks that he has to do with him who is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. He looks within him and around him, but he sees nothing that can afford him a just ground of hope and reconciliation. He has neither a righteousness that can shelter him from punishment, nor a power that can avert it from overtaking and overwhelming him. But what no sinner has of himself he is invited to come and receive from Christ. "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." The same infinitely precious and important truth is also embodied in that passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where it is said, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Thus, then, but for the work of Christ, there could be no means of satisfying Divine justice—no escape from a state of condemnation and death—no admission into the kingdom of grace—no access to everlasting glory. His incarnation, sufferings, and death, were all directed to the one great end of opening a way by which we might be reconciled to God and obtain mercy, in consistency with the honour of the Divine law and the perfection of the Divine government. It was not because God was unwilling to extend mercy, that the interposition of Christ became necessary; infinitely the reverse; for it was the very purpose of God which Christ came to establish, and it is the glory of his work that it is a work which the Father gave him to do. But a method had to be provided by which grace might reign through righteousness, and not invade or impair the immutable claims of Divine justice. And here lay the burden of what Christ undertook to do. He had, as it were, to open up a new way by which mercy might reach our guilty race—a way through the foundations of eternal righteousness; and yet, instead of weakening or in any way defacing them, to manifest, by so doing, their impregnable strength, and to confirm their stability. What had never

been conceived to be possible before by any created being, to reconcile things in heaven and things on earth—the attributes and perfections of God as the judge of all, and the pardon and salvation of sinners—was Christ's transcendent and glorious achievement. A new thing had to be done, involving a moral miracle of surpassing mystery and difficulty. There lay on the one side a world of perishing outcasts, while on the other there was a fountain of infinite love; but Divine justice erected its impenetrable barriers between; and the question came to be, How convey the streams of healing grace to relieve the miseries and to supply the wants of a ruined race? The stroke of Moses' rod brought water from the bosom of the flinty rock to satiate and refresh the parched and dying Israelites in the wilderness. But here there was an infinitely deeper emergency to be met, and that connected with difficulties infinitely more insuperable. What is the intractability of adamant compared with the inviolability of the Divine perfections? How, then, bring mercy from the bosom of justice, and by what means unite in a covenant of peace a holy God and sinful creatures?

Can any thing more than another deepen your conviction of the necessity of reconciliation with God, it is to look upon Christ's work in all its arduousness and in all its magnitude, in its relation to the Divine attributes. With men it is often imagined that the mercy of God is such as to encourage them to conceive, that there is nothing which they cannot expect from it. But will God magnify one perfection at the expense of another, or can he divest himself of his truth and righteousness to show himself gracious? Instead of an unconditional forgiveness, involving the necessary evils of moral anarchy, and an utter subversion of the authority of law, which God can never grant, however the impenitent may desire it, the work of Christ provides for the extension of mercy in a manner equally glorifying to God, and sanctifying in its efficacy upon those who receive it. It brings you within the walls of salvation by a way which, while it allows an abundant entrance into the kingdom of grace, impresses you with the highest conceptions of the infinite righteousness of God. For with what an expense of labour, suffering, and blood did the Redeemer provide this way and lay it open for you? And as you meditate upon his work, how should every vain thought perish of the possibility of finding salvation in any other way!

I. From the illustration now given of the text, we proceed to deduce the following practical inferences. In the *first* place, the Prophetic office of Christ is one of a peculiarly gracious and encouraging nature to sinners. The terrors of Sinai induced the Israelites to desire that God might no more speak to them but through the intervention of Moses;

and how much greater reason has every truly convinced and awakened sinner to desire that God may speak to him always in and through Christ. How tender and soothing are the words of Christ to every afflicted soul—to all who feel the evil of sin, and who desire to be freed from its guilt and misery ! He never brings forward the justice of God but in connection with his mercy ; he never tells of his holiness without proclaiming his loving kindness and compassion ; and, whilst he reveals to us that we have all fallen by our transgressions, and are in danger of hell, he connects with it the precious declaration, that “ God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.”

Did the thunders of the law piercing the hearts of the Israelites make them solicitous to have Moses for their covert ever afterwards, and that they might hear the voice of God as a lawgiver no more ? and how should not the same impression lead you much more to seek an interest in Christ, who has been ordained to be a Redeemer from the curse of the law ? . Moses could bear the law in a milder form to the people than that in which they had heard it ; but he could not alter its spirit—he could not abate its obligations—he could not change a ministry of condemnation into a ministration of life, nor actually deliver any of them from a state of guilt and of ruin into a state of acceptance and reconciliation. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ. By him, therefore, the thunders of the law are not merely silenced to those who come to him, but are extinguished—permanently extinguished ; and instead of having to quail under the dread of a merited condemnation, they can rejoice in God, as the Apostle expresses it, “ through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

II. But, in the *second* place, the Prophetic office of Christ is one of infinite dignity, inasmuch as he transacted in it with God for our salvation, and was able to sustain that manifestation of the Divine glory and holiness which no mere man can behold and live. Of Moses it is said, at the close of this Book, “ that there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” He was advanced, in his mortal state, to some measure of that nearness to God and confidence in him which is enjoyed by saints in general only at death, when, being made perfect in holiness, they pass into glory. So great was his faith and reliance on the merits of the Redeemer, that he possessed that perfect love which casteth out fear ; for Moses never could have stood before God had he not obtained a knowledge of the way of salvation, and received an interest in the redemption purchased by Christ. But very different was the trial to which the strength of

Christ himself' was put, and the circumstances in which he sustained, as our Redeemer, the full manifestation and exercise of the Divine holiness. On assuming our nature, and becoming our surety, he had to suffer the penalty due to our sins; and yet, although he felt that a violated law required to be magnified in his person—although he saw God with more than the terror displayed on Sinai, rising up against him, and every attribute of his holy nature arrayed in awful majesty, in vindication of his authority, whilst a flame was kindled which only his blood could quench, and he felt that he would be consumed as a sacrifice to make an atonement for our sin, and to satisfy the claims of Deity—yet he shrunk not from the awful position which, as a mediatorial prophet, he stood engaged to occupy. Who can tell what the man Jesus, even though sustained with all the fulness of indwelling Godhead, must have borne, when, during the whole of his personal ministry, he perceived the storm and the tempest and the flaming fire gathering against him, which were to collect in fearful force and pour themselves on his devoted head, as the representative of sinners? How deeper than Sinai's terrors was the mystery of Calvary's sufferings! There Justice raised its sword, whilst it veiled in darkness a Father's face; and in the gloom of an hour, from which the Sun withdrew its light, while Nature shook, was an expiation made, which caused, not man indeed, but angels to fear and quake, and spread dismay to the farthest limits of creation. Though in some respects like, yet how higher than Moses was the Son of Man, when he thus placed himself between a holy God and guilty man, and bore all the thunders of that power, and all the effects of that justice, which not the pillars of the universe could withstand, nor the terrors of hell equal.

III. In the *third* place, the text presents us with an interesting view of the security and blessedness of all who enjoy an interest in the benefits of Christ's mediation. Whatever of wrath was due to them, it has been exhausted; and they shall never require to have to do with God, simply as a lawgiver, a judge, or an avenger, for all their intercourse with him is ordained to be carried on in and through Christ Jesus. They shall not hear his voice nor see his face as the holy, and righteous, but deeply offended arbiter of the destinies of the moral universe, taking vengeance upon his enemies—they shall not have to encounter a conflict with his outraged holiness, and violated justice, and insulted power—but as God shall look upon them through the medium of a Saviour's imputed righteousness and merits, so shall they, on the other hand, see God in the attractive and winning light of a Saviour's compassion, benignity, and love. And hence the prayer of the Church, when it employs the words of the 84th Psalm—"Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of

thing anointed,"—is just a prayer that God would regard us through the light of his Son's sufferings and death: so that all our sins may be buried to the view of his justice under his atoning sacrifice, and that the light of his reconciled countenance may alone extend to us, as it is now lifted up upon the person of the Redeemer himself. Were an enemy to present himself before one whose vengeance he had righteously incurred, and to introduce himself by taking his son and making him a shield during the interview, would not regard for the son, and the desire to abstain from injuring him, cause the sword to fall from the father's hand, and to suffer the foe, closely entrenched behind him, to escape with impunity? Thus there is "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;" not because they are physically united to him, but because they are spiritually and morally blended with his sufferings and death—because he has set his love upon them, and given them his Spirit and his promises. They are a spiritual Israel, with whom God will carry on every communication through the mediation and intervention of Christ alone. Even the law is now given to them as a new commandment; new, as no longer enforced by the penalty of a curse, but commended and sealed by the Holy Spirit, who teaches them to love much because they have had much forgiven to them, and to render obedience to it as the due and becoming expression of their faith and gratitude. In Christ the thunders of Divine justice may pass over their heads, in their progress to an alienated and rebellious world, but they shall never touch them; and amidst the consternation and havoc of the day of righteous vengeance, when the enemies of God shall be overwhelmed with anguish and dismay, they shall enjoy perfect peace and unbroken security.

This great Prophet, in comparison with whom even Moses in his most gracious aspect was but a feeble type, is now this day made known to you, and offered to you, as he was by Peter and Stephen to the Jews. And shall any after their example blindly and impiously reject him; and despising his grace and salvation, brave a conflict with Omnipotence, or dare to stand and await the decisions of infinite righteousness? Does not your heart condemn you? And the more you allow yourselves to know God as he truly is, are you not convinced that you are altogether vile and sinful before him? Let the voice of his law be heard in your hearts; and has it not a condemning power which destroys your every hope and overwhelms you with anxiety, trepidation, and grief? What does it testify? Is it not that the wages of sin is death, and that this penalty is incurred by every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them? Take home these truths, as you ought to do, as the sure word of God, who cannot lie, and where is your strength or your confidence? Do you not feel that you need a Saviour? Are you not desirous

to acknowledge that your burden is more than you can bear? And in the spirit of fear which agitated the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, are you not prepared to say, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die?"

The law is a schoolmaster to bring you to Christ; and none can feel its power in their hearts without being drawn to desire a Saviour. If there be any, therefore, who cannot feel Christ to be precious—any to whom an offered salvation has no value—they will find upon examination that this arises from their not knowing the power of the law. They do not realize their guilt and their demerit as in the presence of an infinitely holy and righteous God; and hence the necessity of connecting with a call to believe a call to repent, and of pressing upon sinners a conviction of their ruined state, in order to interest them in the reception of the great salvation. Meditate, then, with profound and heartfelt concern upon your state as transgressors before God. Can you behold him in the brightness of his holiness, and the avenging purity of his righteousness, and not die? Have you a day revealed to you in which you must stand before his awful presence, with all your guilt and all your iniquities revealed; and ought not the prospect to overwhelm you with grief and apprehension? And with what deep earnestness should you now look to Jesus, and make him your covert from the storm, and your hiding place from the tempest? In him you have salvation and strength. But beware of trusting to an insufficient repentance, and to an inadequate faith. Entreat of God that, in his infinite mercy, he would give you grace both to repent and to believe to the saving of your souls; for there are none, so long as they are left to themselves, who can attain to this, seeing that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And in every age, what multitudes, is there not reason to fear, have perished because they have never sought to be savingly converted and united to Christ? Seek, then, as those who know their own ignorance and deceitfulness, and impenitence, and unbelief, that God by his Holy Spirit would work in your souls that repentance which is unto life, and that faith which is effectual to the salvation of the soul.

Be convinced, in conclusion, that you cannot draw near to God at any time or in any circumstances with acceptance, but through Christ, and in dependence upon his merits and righteousness. It is to show that you neither know God, nor glorify him as God, to presume that you can approach to him, or in any manner transact with him, but through the great Mediator. Avail yourselves, then, continually of the mediation and intercession of him who has been ordained to this end, and in whom the guiltiest may find acceptance. Put away all confidence in yourselves, or in any works or services which you can do. Seek even for your best actions pardon and acceptance through the Lord Jesus Christ. If the high



priest of Israel presumed to enter into the holiest of all without blood, it was under the penalty of death. What a solemn and impressive warning is this to us, to guard against all self-sufficiency and presumption in drawing near to God, and ever to come to him through the shed blood of the great Mediator. And what a call does it present to the constant, habitual exercise of humble, realizing, relying faith. Rejoice then in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in yourselves; and, knowing that he is ordained to be a mediatorial prophet, draw near through him as infinitely able and willing to save you. Let all your prayers and thanksgivings be offered up in his name; let all your works be performed in the hope of finding acceptance through his merits; and commit to him the keeping of your souls both for time and for eternity. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."—Amen.

## SERMON V.

LOT'S FLIGHT FROM SODOM.

BY THE LATE REV. ROBERT JEFFREY, GIRTHON.

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And, while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."—GENESIS xix. 15-17.

In a previous part of this inspired book, we are told that "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and that Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Gen. xiii. 12, 13. The cry of their depravity had gone up to heaven, and, because their sin was so very grievous, the righteous God determined, in the exercise of his justice without mercy, "to set them forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." In the preceding chapter, we are informed by the infallible historian that "three angels appeared to Abraham," and renewed the promise, repeatedly made to him since he left Ur of the Chaldees, of a son to be born of Sarah "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed," and pointed out the exact time when this promise was to be fulfilled. Having executed this part of their commission, "the men rose up and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on their way." The patriarch being the chosen instrument for accomplishing the Divine purposes, and the Lord knowing "that he would command his children and his household after him, and that they would keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment," revealed to the father of the faithful his designs respecting the guilty inhabitants of the neighbouring district, among whom his pious nephew was then sojourning. Influenced by that

\* The author of this discourse died in March 1844. On the morning of the day, and a few hours before his death, he ordered this sermon to be forwarded as his contribution to the Free Church Pulpit. He was a firm and faithful adherent to the principles of the Free Church, and within half an hour of his death, after having spoken of his own church and congregation, he said with peculiar energy, "I feel my affection increasing towards the glorious cause, which is the cause of God, founded upon a rock. Next to the salvation of my own soul, the prosperity of the Free Church lies nearest my heart, and I know it will prosper."

love to the souls of men, whatever may be the enormity of their conduct, which the grace of God awakens in every heart that has been the subject of its convincing and converting efficacy, Abraham, though but "dust and ashes, takes upon him to speak unto the Lord" in behalf of the condemned criminals, over whose heads the sword of Almighty vengeance was now suspended, and pleads their cause with a warmth, increasing as he proceeds in his entreaties, and more energetically expressed in proportion to the favourable reception given by "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious," to his supplications. The corruption of the objects of his solicitude, however, was universal and complete. There were not ten of the reprobate community "that did understand and seek God. They were all gone aside, they were altogether become filthy; there was none that did good, no not one." Ps. xiv. 2-4. The believer convinced, on authority which he could not question, of the universality of the moral disease, and satisfied that "the Judge of all the earth would do right," ceased to intercede when there was no hope of pardon, and "his prayer returned into his own bosom." "And the Lord," that is, the mediator, the messenger of the new covenant, "went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned unto his place."

The doom of the sinners being now sealed, and the day of destruction at hand, Jehovah, "according to the counsel of his will, whereby for his own glory he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass," directs his ministering spirits to separate the clean from the unclean, the wheat from the tares, and to "deliver just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)," before He, "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah unto ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter ii. 6-8. The cup of their iniquity was now filled up to the very brim; it is in their hands, it is raised to their lips, and the lowest dregs thereof they must wring out and drink. Not another day for repentance, not another offer of mercy. "It is come, it is come, the end is come; snares, fire, and brimstone, furious storms." "And the men said unto Lot, hast thou here any besides? thy sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy"—says the Son of God in the human form—"we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." Gen. xix. 12, 13.

The proof of divinity which the patriarch had so lately witnessed, as

exhibited on the part of his guests, was now confirmed by the announcement of the object which they had in view, in visiting the polluted and devoted people among whom he had for a time fixed his abode. That faith, which is the gift of God, and without which it is impossible to please him, or even to approach him, had been implanted in the heart of Lot as a living and active principle of conduct. He listened with reverence to the command of heaven ; he believed the message delivered to be the purpose of unerring wisdom, and he obeyed the important, peremptory orders which he had received without one misgiving thought, and with all the alacrity which their urgency demanded. "And he went out and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said"—the hurriedness of his manner expresses at once his anxiety, his humanity, and his faith—"Up, get you out of this place ; for the Lord will destroy this city." He had not the shadow of a doubt as to the certainty of the dreadful catastrophe. "But"—and O, Christians, mark the effect of an evil heart of unbelief—"but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." They had never reflected on the heinousness and bitterness of sin—they had never for a moment considered themselves as sinners ; and though perhaps not so fearfully immoral as their countrymen—for we cannot suppose that a religious man like Lot would have "joined in affinity" with them if they had been as openly and regardlessly flagitious as their neighbours—their behaviour testifies that they belonged to that class of self-titled wise men who disgrace every age, by whom any thing like a supernatural communication from the governor of the world is treated as visionary, unworthy of rational attention, and to be spurned away by the enlightened with contempt. "And when the morning arose"—and the sun of that morning would go down on Sodom and all its population, a mingled mass of smouldering ashes—"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot"—for his heart yearned over objects who had some hold on his affections, and who were so instantly to be exterminated, and bled for souls so soon to be consigned to the blackness of darkness for ever—"Saying, Arise," this is no time for unavailing regrets, thy own existence is in danger, extreme danger, "take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here"—the others perished with their husbands, for they had not married in the Lord—"lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered"—How could he leave children, however infatuated and disobedient, to such a fate ? Every parent present feels that he could not but linger—"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife"—who was still more reluctant to depart, and as her end shows from very different motives—"and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him : and they brought him forth, and set him

without the city. And it came to pass when they had brought them forth abroad that He"—(here you will observe that the number is changed, and the Second Person of the Trinity, I am disposed to think, is now the speaker)—"He said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

The subsequent part of the chapter makes us acquainted with the destiny of the five cities, with their surrounding territories, which were once as the garden of the Lord, but which, having been destroyed by the Omnipotent in his wrath, and by the most dreadful means which imagination can conceive, are now covered by the sluggish, desolate, cheerless, and lifeless waters of the Dead Sea. A drearier scene than what this famous lake and its environs exhibit is not offered any where to the eye of man. The judgments of God are visibly there in all the terrible-ness of their infliction. Let him that seeth, heareth, or readeth, understand. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

Such, my brethren, is a short account from Scripture history of one of the most remarkable interpositions on record of the Almighty in the affairs of this lower world; such was the awful vindication of his holiness as a God of retribution; and such the appalling evidence of his abhorrence of sin, given for the warning and instruction of the generations following.

The object which I have in view in drawing your attention to the passage thus briefly and literally illustrated, is of the utmost importance to every descendant of the first transgressor, and therefore himself a transgressor from the womb, who would know his danger and escape from it—who would find the indispensable remedy and apply it—and, therefore, in discoursing from the words of the text, it will be my endeavour, in dependence on the Divine blessing promised to the prayer of faith,

I. To direct your thoughts to the reality and magnitude of the danger to which the sinner is exposed;

II. To the means which God employs to awaken him to a true sense of his danger;

III. To the state of his mind after he has been made acquainted with his desperate condition; and

IV. To the conduct which he ought and is enabled to pursue when he feels that God in Christ has been merciful unto him.

All these particulars—and can you say, my brethren, that they are not the most important truths—are clearly contained in the passage before

us ; and I earnestly entreat your serious attention while I attempt, in the strength of the Spirit, to explain and enforce them.

I. I observe, then, in the *first* place, that we are here taught the reality and magnitude of the danger to which the sinner is exposed.

Lot was expressly assured that the Lord would visit with his judgments the incorrigible transgressors by whom he was surrounded, and through whose evil communications some of his family, as we have seen, had been contaminated, and who, as they were thus partakers of their sins, were necessarily involved in their punishment. And what other authority had he or could he have for the melancholy fact of their depravity, than we have or can have for our own ? The knowledge in both cases was derived from the Omniscient Witness of men and the All-searching Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But there is another irrefragable proof of the same wonderful and deplorable truth, by which he was, though his corrupted neighbours were not, convinced. He had the testimony of his conscience confirming the declaration of God, that "the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil and that continually ;" and the intensest spiritual insensibility, or the most arrogant intellectual pride, alone can prevent us from arriving at the same conclusion—a conclusion, however, be it remembered, to which we must come, if we would be saved. And where had this darkening of the understanding, this perversion of the will, and this ungodliness of the affections, their source ? and on what momentous event in the history of the human race can we fix as the date of their disorganizing, enslaving, and rampant tyranny ? In the fall of Adam, as our federal head and representative, and on that act of wilful, deliberate disobedience, by which he set at defiance the power and the threatening of Him, his Creator, his Friend, and his Companion, who had said, as if his all depended on it, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Sin had its origin in the abode of innocence, and death commenced his reign within sight of the tree of life.

As certainly, then, as we are the descendants of the first man created in the image of God, and by transgression fallen from his primeval condition of holiness, dignity, and happiness, and thus made liable to misery here and to everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power hereafter, so assuredly we inherit a nature corrupted by the spiritual disease which, prevailing against him, brought him low, and incur the penalty of that doom to which he was adjudged by the sentence pronounced on the very spot which had been the scene of his rebellion: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,

so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” This doctrine has been often derided and loudly anathematised as unworthy of the belief of any but the slaves of a wretched superstition ;—the rational thinker laughs to scorn such an absurdity. But if the Word of God were silent on the subject, instead of being as express on the point as language can be, the existence of moral evil is manifest in the experience of every man born of woman, and proclaimed by the accusings of conscience even before the individual who is the object of their attack has been savingly awakened to a sense of his guilt, and renewed in the spirit of his mind, and before he can joyfully declare that with him old things have passed away, and that all things are become new. Now, my brethren, if on such grounds we are compelled to admit the reality of the moral plague that has infected with its deadly poison every member of the human family, it inevitably follows that we must admit at the same time the reality of the danger inseparably connected with it. Divine authority is given in attestation of the one as well as of the other ; and there is no alternative but belief in the statements of “the lively oracles” or the rejection of revelation as “a cunningly devised fable.” I will not insult you, my friends, by asking which of these alternatives you are disposed to choose. I take it for granted then that you acknowledge *you are sinners*, sinners by inheritance, and sinners by wicked works. Are you really aware, on serious reflection, of the perilous state wherein you are living, if Jesus has not, in answer to your fervently and frequently expressed petition, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make us clean,” replied in the exercise of that love which he beareth unto his own, “I will, be ye clean?” Have you ever thought, as you ought to think, that the Lord, mighty in battle, is the adversary with whom you are contending, and that none hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered ? Have you ever meditated on the fact of your natural alienation and your practical ungodliness being the causes of all your anxieties and sorrows in time ; and of all your apprehensions of suffering, and of your actual sufferings through eternity ? Have you ever, in moments when, if you had not been spiritually blind, it must have been evident that the Lord was then condescending to give you a more than usually favourable opportunity of considering what you *are*, in contrast with what you *should* be—O have you in such moments as these viewed yourselves as exposed to all the consequences, temporal and eternal, of God’s displeasure, existing in a state of exclusion from, and of enmity with, your Creator and Benefactor, subject to the outpouring of his yet restrained wrath, and having nothing to expect but the portion of the reprobates in the abodes of outer darkness for ever and ever ? O my brethren, have you given even a passing glance at these things, and will

you continue to deny that the sinner's danger, and therefore your individual danger, is extreme? and will you not be afraid of the judgments that must overtake and consume you, if you do not escape for your life, and hasten to the city of refuge where the avenger of blood cannot enter, and where you shall dwell in perfect peace under the protection of Jesus, the Head of all principalities and powers, the Redeemer of the guilty, and the Lord your righteousness? "He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."—Isaiah lvii. 2.

The reality of the sinner's danger is thus proved by the express statements of the Word of God, and by the struggles of conscience, as the Almighty's vicegerent, even in the unregenerated heart. And if the reality be admitted—and it must be admitted whether we will or not—the belief of its magnitude follows as a necessary consequence. The Being whom we insult and defy by our obstinate perseverance in evil, is omnipotent, all-wise, and all-compassionate. We can urge nothing in extenuation of our ignorance. We are blessed with the means of acquiring knowledge: we have the law and the testimony as our guides. Christ crucified, the only hope of glory, is set before us in all the freeness and fulness of his offered salvation. We are informed by authority which is infallible, and therefore unquestionable, that if we will none of his counsel, and despise all his reproof, we "shall eat the fruit of our own ways, and be filled with our own devices." And if an incensed God be an object of terror—if acting in direct opposition to the designs of his government be insurrection against his sovereignty, and a mad attempt, however futile, to subvert his throne—if the murder of the soul by our own suicidal deed be unnatural and condemning—if not merely rejecting, but treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, be the evidence of a state of mind as deplorable as it is nearly hopeless—if doing despite to the Spirit of grace, by turning away from his warnings, and quenching the smallest spark of that refining fire which he wishes to kindle, and cause to shine within us, be to commit the sin for which the Saviour repeatedly assures us there is hardly any, *if any* remission—if deliberately choosing death, spiritual and eternal death, with all its deprivations and inflictions, when life, divine and everlasting, with all its present blessings and all its future joys, is graciously and urgently pressed on our acceptance, be procedure as reckless and insane as it is impious, God-provoking, and self-destructive, then is our danger, and its equivalent in wrath "treasured up for us against the day of wrath, and full revelation of the righteous judgment of God" incalculable. "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble:



and that day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Malachi iv. 1.

II. I now proceed to direct your thoughts to the second thing proposed in our method of treating the subject before us—to the means employed by God to awaken the sinner to a true sense of the reality and magnitude of his danger. And here, my brethren, I would remark, that if we have formed an accurate estimate of what has been already stated, and just conceptions of the wretchedness and helplessness of the natural man, we must be led to the all-essential truth, that "as the carnal mind is enmity against God, neither is it subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be;" and that, as being sold under sin, and utterly unable of ourselves, as well as totally indisposed, to make any effectual exertions for our recovery, we must seek in the scheme revealed in the gospel the only way in which the first tendency to the requisite change can be produced, and find there the only agent through whose powerful working the eyes of the moral sleeper are opened to behold the fearful precipice, on the edge of which he has for years been standing, and over which another moment's folding of the hands to sleep might have hurled him headlong into the yawning gulf, to struggle, to sink, and to disappear for ever. The Holy Spirit is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last in the work of arousing from their death-like lethargy the prison-bound thralls or slaves of Satan—of "convincing them of their sin and misery, of enlightening their minds in the knowledge of Christ, of renewing their wills, and thus of persuading and enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ as freely offered to them in the gospel." But the Spirit, like the Father and the Son—for "these three are one"—employs ordinary as well as extraordinary means for the accomplishment of his purposes of mercy. At one time he comes upon the sinner as an armed man, and attacks directly the stronghold of infidelity in the heart, and throws down every barrier by which it was guarded, and takes the chains from conscience and imparts to it a tenfold vigour, and gives additional terrors to the law, and uncovers the place of torment, and renders audible the groans of the damned, and threatens a participation in their endless agony, and thus compels the trembling, shuddering, and horror-struck culprit to exclaim, "O not these! Lord, save me, I perish!" "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" "Lord, I now believe, help thou my unbelief." "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Zechariah iii. 2.

At another time—and this is the more usual mode of his operation—the Sanctifier executes his office of bringing transgressors out of darkness

into his marvellous light through the instrumentality of the dispensations of God's providence, and of the faithful preaching of the word by his called, tried, and appointed messengers. The gloomiest part of the night, it has been observed, is that which immediately precedes the dawn, and the severest trials of those who have been elected unto everlasting life are frequently the precursors of that blessed change of the heart and all its affections which ushers in the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings, and "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

Bodily pain leads to reflection on the frail materials of which the earthly house of our tabernacle is composed—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." Adversity teaches the very difficult but salutary lesson of non-dependence on any temporal good. "Wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as the eagle towards heaven." Proverbs xxiii. 3. The loss of friends who rejoiced or wept with us is a powerful call to meditation on the insecurity of the purest merely human enjoyment. "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Childhood, and youth, and mature age, with all their endearments, and ties, and attractions, are vanity. The unexpected summons of a fellow-creature, in the moment perhaps of self-produced madness, to appear before a long neglected, if not openly insulted God, is a warning as plainly expressed as if the Spirit had written it in characters so legible that he may run that readeth it, that we also should be ready, because we know not by what unforeseen but commissioned stroke we are to be severed from time and launched into eternity. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Psalm lxxiii. 18, 19, 20.

By all these means of arousing attention and of awakening fear, does the Spirit of God, who at first moved on the face of the material troubled waters, and commanded them to be tranquil, still act on the spiritual chaos which is equally without form and void, and strive with unrenewed man and his corruptions; and thus with an energy which the adversary cannot resist does he subdue the innate stubbornness of the sinner's mind, and break off his yoke, and set him at liberty, and enlarge his heart, and establish his goings, and bring him to glory. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." 2 Cor. v. 5.

Another instrument which the Spirit uses to make sinners at ease in Zion sensible of their danger and afraid of the consequences, is the regular ministration of the Word, mighty as it is by his blessing for

the pulling down of strongholds. It is a truth, and this circumstance should induce each of us to examine into the propriety of its application to our individual state, it is a truth that many who are habitual in their attendance on the public means of grace, and engage in the most sacred of our solemnities, have never been persuaded as they ought to be of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and convinced that "their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah, that their grapes are grapes of gall, that their clusters are bitter." Deut. xxxiii. 32. The Lord alone can make them profit by the opening of his servants' mouth, and write instruction upon the table of their hearts; and it is thus that he has often arrested the carnally secure, and showed them their work and their transgressions, and pointed out to them the claims of justice which they are utterly unable to satisfy, and driven them from their refuge of lies, and stripped them of all their disguises, and exhibited them in all their spiritual destitution, that he might create them anew in Christ Jesus, and clothe them in the robes of the Saviour's righteousness, and confirm beyond the possibility of a challenge their title to the heavenly inheritance, and effectually seal their souls unto the day of redemption. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me; thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isaiah xii. 1, 2, 3.

Now, my brethren, I would ask, by way of applying this part of our subject, if you have not been addressed by the Spirit of God in all these varieties of exhortation, and blessed with the enjoyment of those ordinances by the improvement of which the man of God, who knows his calling and election by grace, is thoroughly furnished unto every good work, and by the careless and unspiritual observance of which the guilt of the indifferent is incalculably increased, and must be visited with proportionally fearful tokens of the Divine indignation? O remember, my brethren, that you may have a name to live, while you are dead, and that, if you have not experienced that change of the heart, and of its purposes and views, which the Holy Ghost alone can effect and render permanent, you have not seen the reality and magnitude of your danger, or been made savingly acquainted with the means appointed to convince you that, if you repent not, you shall all likewise perish. But I hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation. I do trust that you have had the truths now illustrated carried home to your hearts, and fixed there by the Spirit, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. And O if there

be any present who may have hitherto neglected the great salvation, and who, if death were at this moment commissioned to take them away to their account, could have little, if any, expectation of entering into the joys of their Lord, I do most pressingly and affectionately implore such to lose not another moment of their precious time, but instantly to cast themselves at the feet of Jesus, and refuse to rise from their appropriate position till he has said in the fulness of his love, Son or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. This is language dear and reviving to the converted sinner's heart; and O cry, wrestle, and pray, till you have heard it from his blessed lips, and can join the Church in her character of her head. "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Song v. 16. How blessed are the privileges and the state of those who can use this language; and, through Divine grace, you may be prepared and authorized to use it! Make Jesus your all, and it will be yours.

III. I shall now endeavour, in the *third* place, to direct your thoughts to the state of the sinner's mind when he has been awakened, in the manner already pointed out, to a right sense of his lost and desperate condition. And under this head I shall be led to speak a strange language, I fear, to some of you now hearing me—a language, however, which you must understand, and to the very letter, before you can exclaim with the feelings of the individual who utters it so sincerely, self-condemningly, and emphatically in the gospel, "God be merciful unto me a sinner."

The unchanged "heart is deceitful above all things," and, in so far as godliness is concerned, "desperately wicked;" and in nothing do this deceitfulness and this desperate wickedness appear so radically, and truly, and conspicuously a part of our fallen being, as in the attempts which we make to palliate what is indefensible and inexcusable, and to characterise by the name of frailties and foibles what are held in the estimation of God, and represented in his Word, as symptoms of the deadliest enmity against the Most High, and sufficient to banish us from the light of his countenance for ever. It is on this point that Satan exerts all his darkening, conscience-searing, and benumbing influence, for well does this subtle adversary know that when once the mask is taken off the face of sin, the sinner could not but loathe and avoid what he had lately admired and loved as "the perfection of beauty." He, therefore, labours unweariedly, and both directly by his own suggestions, and indirectly through the agents whom he is permitted to employ, as prince of this apostate world, to keep the veil on the head of the seducer, and thus to lead the fancy to imagine charms in objects with whom are "the dead,

and whose guests are in the depths of hell." Here he displays his delegated power, and thus he accomplishes those plans of opposition to the Divine purposes, and of unextinguishable hatred of goodness in the soul, which he formed from the moment that man was created, and the execution of which he commenced in paradise, and is still carrying on through the instrumentality of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

This revealed truth has often been sneered at, or, where any thing like a sense of decency remains, attempted to be explained away by learned dissertations on figures of speech, and eastern personification, and hyperbole. Such a method of getting rid of a humiliating and troublesome doctrine may satisfy the corrupt infidel and the nominal Christian; but no sooner has the Spirit of God made a movement against the citadel of unbelief, and softened the stony heart, and touched the unclean lips with a live coal from the altar, than the reality of the devil's presence and operation is felt and acknowledged. There is then an end of all delusion: sin stands disclosed in all its hideousness and hatefulness; and sin is the name given to many thoughts, words, and actions, which were once regarded as any thing but offensive, either in the sight of God or man. The transgressor's natural blindness, rendered still thicker by the machinations of the evil one on the perverted will and unholy affections, is removed sometimes instantly by a single act of the sanctifier's uncontrollable working, and sometimes gradually by his causing his patient to see his sins at first indistinctly, and then by putting his hands again upon his eyes and making him look up, and completely restoring him and enabling him to perceive every iniquity clearly. Mark viii. 25. It is now that the sinner's troubles, anxieties, and sorrows begin. Formerly it was "the waveless calm, the slumber of the dead." The fathomless deep was below. But how could he anticipate any danger when he gazed securely on the smoothness of its surface? Danger! danger in tranquillity! danger in walking in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes! danger in the fulness of enjoyment! danger in the entire absence of fear! danger in gliding over unruffled and peaceful waters! Yes, there was danger, and danger too of the most appalling description; and now the sinner, long deceiving himself, and deceived by the tempter, sees it, and makes it his own, and trembles at it. Through the means which the enlightening Spirit employs effectually, a new scene is opened to the view of the labouring and heavy-laden descendant of Adam, and the now self-convicted violator of the Divine laws—new feelings are excited, and new objects summoned up to increase and exasperate them. "Thou has laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with

all thy waves. I am shut up, and I cannot come forth : while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." Psalm lxxxviii. 6, 7, 8, 15. This is the language of the awakened soul, and it gives a faithful picture of the state of him whom "the Lord has chosen, a vessel of mercy to be aforehand, prepared unto glory." For still "he is free among the dead"—and about to emerge from his spiritual trials, regenerated and purified—"a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." "For, behold, this self-same thing," says the Apostle, "that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" 2 Cor. vii. 11. This verse, my brethren, describes most correctly and concisely the condition of the disquieted sinner; and a brief illustration of these comprehensive words is the best method which we can adopt for enabling you to prove your own selves on this point of pressing, universal, and everlasting importance.

When the Holy Ghost, then, is about to bring the moral captive "out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and to set his feet upon a rock, to establish his goings, and to put a new song in his mouth, even praise unto our God, that many may see it, and fear and trust in the Lord" (Psalm xl.), the first state of his mind, according to the inspired Paul, is "carefulness," or anxiety respecting the amount of his sin, and the extent of his danger. What carefulness it wrought in you! A righteous and angry God is above him, and "hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming." The light which has been shed on him from on high, is just sufficient to shew him the darkness which rests, and has long rested, on his understanding, and to give him partial glimpses of the spiritual enemies that have made his heart, ever since he had one, the scene of their operations. The law which he trampled on as fit only for slaves, is now regarded as holy, and just, and good; and cursed, he now feels, is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book which contains it to do them. Is there a commandment therein recorded as universally and strictly binding which he has not broken? Is there a duty there enjoined which he has not neglected? Is there a privilege there mentioned which he has not cast behind him? Is there a promise there held out to which he has not turned a deaf ear? Is there an offer there made which he has not scornfully repelled? Is there a threatening there denounced which he has not contemptuously despised? Is there an exhibition of Almighty power there manifested which he has not presumptuously and impiously defied? And after such a survey of what he has been, now presented in striking contrast with what he should have been, what terms can more appropriately and

strongly express the sentiments awakened in his breast than the words of the prophet Isaiah, when he saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and the seraphim with covered faces bending in lowly adoration before him : "Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips," totally depraved ; "and I dwell among a people of unclean lips," equally, though not more, depraved than myself, "for mine eyes have seen" as holy, holy, holy, in his nature, works, and ways, "the King, the Lord of Hosts." Isaiah vi. 5.

"Yea, what clearing of yourselves !" "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," though attached and utterly to be cast out from his ancient inheritance, is not yet subdued, and rises against the unwelcome intruder who has entered the house which he has so long inhabited, in the expectation of finding it "empty, swept, and garnished." The sinner sees his guilt in its enormity and danger, and therefore anxiously looks around him for any grounds of palliation by which he may lessen the amount of his depravity, and justify himself to a certain extent, at least, in the eye of an omniscient and offended God. Ignorance, or want of opportunities of learning the lessons of wisdom, or evil companions, or strong temptations, or the devices of Satan, are excuses mustered up, and pleaded for continuing in a state of enmity with his Maker, and disregarding the warnings he may have received, and the offers of a free salvation which may have been addressed to him. The understanding is still unwilling to confess the fallibility of its natural and antichristian pride ; and the heart is still averse from pulling down, and grinding to powder the idols which have long been erected "in the chambers of its imagery," But all opposition yields to the Spirit "travelling in the greatness of his strength." "Who art thou, O great mountain ? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." "Enter into the rock and hide thee in the dust for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Isaiah ii. 10, 11.

And now the sinner is brought, by the total failure of all his attempts at self-justification, to add with the Apostle, "Yea, what indignation !"—indignation at himself for his infatuation and obstinacy—his cowardice and his duplicity—his perverseness and his insensibility—his unworthiness and his infidelity. He views all these in the light of enemies whom he has nourished and brought up to plague, to torment, and destroy him ; and against them is his wrath kindled, "the coals whereof are coals of fire (juniper), which hath a most vehement flame." The breath of the Spirit fans it ; the hand

of the Spirit adds fuel to it, and the might of the Spirit increases it, till in this the day of the Lord God of Hosts, a day of vengeance, he has avenged himself completely of his adversaries, utterly consumed them with his terrors, and taken away the iniquity of his people, and ransomed and received them graciously. Have you then, my brethren, felt this anxiety when you reflected on your state, the utter insufficiency of your endeavours to clear yourselves from the guilt under which you were lying, and hatred of sin and indignation at your extreme folly in being subject to it? All this is an evidence that Divine grace has been and is working in your hearts; and that, therefore, you have a well-grounded hope that "you shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "And if Christ be thus in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. viii. 21, 10.

"Yea, what fear!" The sinner's anxiety having been called into full exercise, his self-vindication having utterly failed, and his displeasure being aroused against himself for yielding up his principles to the direction and control of his spiritual adversaries, he is now enabled to see the numberless and dreadful perils by which he was continually surrounded, while he imagined he was in perfect safety, and was saying, in the unbroken, undoubting, and all-confiding security of his unsanctified soul, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved." But now the Lord is revealed to him in his majesty, glorious in holiness, asserting his rights, displaying his supremacy, irresistible in his sovereignty, ruling in the armies of heaven, doing according to his pleasure among the inhabitants of the earth, and acting tremendously in the regions of eternal punishment. And when the transgressor reflects on the truth of these statements, and is compelled to consider that the God thus manifested to him is the Being under whose malediction he is lying, by whose sentence he is condemned, before whose tribunal he must appear, and at whose command—"Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire"—he must bid farewell to happiness, and enter upon unmitigated misery; O my brethren, how can he not but fear through every fibre of his frame, lest he should be a castaway—lest the Lord should have justly forgotten to be gracious, and in his righteousness have shut up his tender mercies? But in this very circumstance we have an evidence that the Spirit is dealing savingly with him, and about to "make him hear joy and gladness, that the bones which he has" in mercy "broken may rejoice."

"Yea," adds the Apostle—"yea, what vehement desire!" "Vehement desire" to be set free from the fear of being any longer an object of the Divine displeasure, and of the Lord's execution of the purposes



of his judgment without any the smallest mingling of mercy—"vehement desire" of being not merely relieved from condemnation, but of being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"—"vehement desire" of being reinstated in the favour of the uncreated, almighty, and all-seeing Maker and Preserver of the earth and the fulness thereof, and of the world and them that dwell therein—"vehement desire" of being united to Christ as the living Head of his Church, and the alone Saviour of the little flock to which it is his Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom—"vehement desire" of being the recipient of the Spirit's extraordinary influence, by which only the spiritual life is begun in the soul, and sustained, and rendered progressive, all-subduing, and immortal—and "vehement desire" of being transformed by the renewing of the mind into a partaker of the Divine nature, and thus of being made meet for entering into the new Jerusalem, for contemplating the Redeemer in the possession of his original dignity, for beholding on his once bleeding head the mediatorial crown, and for seeing in his once pinioned hands the sceptre of universal empire.

"Yea, what zeal!" "Zeal" for the attainment of those exalted and soul-satisfying objects which are now presented in all their attractions, excellence, and importance, to the eye of his faith—"zeal" for the promotion of God's glory and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom among men—"zeal" for overthrowing the dominion of sin and Satan, and establishing in its stead the reign of gospel righteousness, purity, and peace—"zeal" for the complete emancipation of every faculty of the understanding and of every feeling of the heart from the spirit of bondage, and for the undisturbed possession of the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Rom. viii. 15.

"Yea," concludes the Apostle, "Yea, what revenge!" Inspired with a godly jealousy of himself, made acquainted with the source of all his depravity and the cause of all his spiritual misery, and convinced that the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered, the converted sinner being enabled to throw himself entirely on the resources provided and abundantly supplied in the scheme of reconciliation, determines to regard the Lord's enemies as his own most implacable foes; and taking unto him the whole armour of God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, he girds his loins about with truth; he puts on the breastplate of righteousness, and has his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, he seizes the shield of faith,

wherewith alone he can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. He places on his head the helmet of salvation ; he draws the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ; and, as the infallible evidence of his being a good soldier of Jesus Christ, whose he is and whom he serves, he prays always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watches thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and especially for those who have the oversight of the flock of God, that utterance may be given unto them, that they may open their mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. Eph. vi. 13, 14. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee ? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ? I hate them with perfect hatred ; I count them mine enemies." Psalm cxxxix. 21. Against these, not persons, be it remembered, but the sins of which the persons are guilty, the believer breathes out threatenings and slaughter, and resting on him who teacheth his hands to war, he pursues them and overtakes them, nor does he turn again till they are consumed. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Ps. xviii. 34, 37, 46.

Such, my brethren, is the state of the sinner's mind, after he has been awakened to a true sense of his lost and desperate condition ; and thus you may prove yourselves, and ascertain whether the morning has arisen upon you as it did on Lot ; whether the Angel of the covenant has hastened you, and while you lingered, whether he has laid hold upon you, and brought you forth, and set you without the city of destruction, that you may not be consumed in its iniquity. If these be indeed your circumstances, and God grant that they may, then you are prepared to accompany me while I endeavour, in the fourth and last place, to point out the conduct which the sinner is persuaded and enabled to pursue when he feels in his blessed experience that the Lord in Christ has been merciful unto him.

IV. "And it came to pass when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee ; neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." The enlightening and quickening spirit having begun the good work, is pledged to carry it on and to complete it. The night of mental anxiety, of spiritual darkness, and religious despondency, is past ; and dreary, cheerless, and fraught with "sore distress," were the hours which comprehended this the most important period of the sinner's existence ; the morning star has appeared, the dawn is at last arrived, and the sun cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. The true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, the

light of gospel splendour and gospel liberty, has his going forth from the end of the mystical heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing in the moral globe, on which he pours his vivifying, enlivening, and gladdening rays, that is hid from the heat thereof. Psalm xix. 5, 6. Spiritual strength is infused into the renewed mind ; the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, is sufficient for the perfecting of the saints, for blessing the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; and the language of the redeemed captive, now conscious that he is a new creature, and proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, is that of the spouse when she expresses her affection for him, who had looked upon her when she was black ; when her mother's children were angry with her ; when they made her the keeper of their vineyards ; but her own vineyard had she not kept. " Draw me, we will run after thee. The King hath brought me into his chambers : we will be glad and rejoice in thee ; we will remember thy love more than wine : the upright love thee." Song i. 4. The required ability having been communicated, and continued from the fountain of all spiritual might, and the believer, receiving of the fulness of the godhead, grace for grace, is freed from the sins that most easily beset him, and glorying in the cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto him and he unto the world, is qualified to fight a good fight, to finish his course, to keep the faith ; and henceforth to rejoice in the hope that there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to him at that day ; and not to him only, but unto all them that love his appearing. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

The understanding, formerly darkened, is now restored to its original perspicuity—the will, formerly crooked, is now made straight—the affections, formerly earthly, are now set on things above—the views, formerly low, now reach to heaven—and the hopes, formerly as empty as the objects on which they were fixed, were worthless, are now satisfied with nothing less than " a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." The Lord has indeed been merciful, and " according to his Divine power hath thus given all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us unto glory and virtue : whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." 2 Peter i. 3, 4.

And having thus done all things well, and fitted us for the duties to which he has called us in the course of his providence, and which he has prepared us effectually to discharge, we are bound by ties which he himself has laid upon us, to " give diligence to make our calling and election sure, by adding to our faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ;

and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; knowing, as we do, that as many as walk according to this rule, peace is pronounced on them and mercy, and upon all the Israel of God." Gal. v. 6, 7.

The exalted service on which the Christian has now entered is not engaged in "from constraint, but willingly." "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death;" and he therefore feels that *his* Saviour's commandments are not grievous; that "his yoke is easy, and his burden light." The Divine statutes are his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, and the pleasures which the believing observance of them imparts, are to him a reviving and sustaining foretaste of those ravishing and eternal delights with which he shall be satisfied abundantly in that land, where, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, thy God, O thou justified sinner, shall rejoice for ever over thee. "Hosanna in the highest,"—"The Lord hath been mindful of us."

I have now finished my remarks on this passage of Scripture. I have stated plainly what I hold as truths of everlasting moment and of universal interest. I am convinced there is no other way than what has been pointed out to solid peace here, and to fulness of joy hereafter. I have directed your thoughts to the universality and deadliness of the disease, and to the only infallible and freely offered remedy. If you have been impressed by what has been said, I implore you to regard this impression as the work of the Spirit, and O be earnest in prayer that his influence may be continued till you have escaped the danger of the plain and reached the mountain of the Lord—the house of the God of Jacob—where he will teach you face to face of his ways, and you shall walk unswervingly and triumphantly in his paths for ever. The Lord has long called on you with all the importunateness and affection of a Father in Christ, willing and solicitous to save you. His hands are still stretched out to welcome, nay, to bring you from your wanderings. Be persuaded of your danger, if you have not yet seen it; and if you are in the act of escaping, and hurrying to your refuge, O look not back—stay not in all the plain. It is all doomed—not one solitary corner of it a safe resting place. "Remember Lot's wife;" and, with her dreadful fate before you as a warning, push on, slacken not, weary not. The Spirit is supporting you, and giving you strength to persevere till you have reached Mount Calvary; and the "Man of Sorrows," bleeding and dying there, will convince you by one smile of his countenance that all is well with you his chosen ones, and that he will be the strength of your hearts and your portion for ever.

## SERMON VI.

RESTRAINING OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE IN FAMILIES.

BY THE REV. CHARLES JOHN BROWN,

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“Exhort one another daily.”—HEB. iii. 13.

THESE words, taken in their largest and widest bearing, point to the great general duty lying on the disciples of Christ to take a lively interest in each other's spiritual welfare, and to seek the advancement of it, as in other ways, so especially by stirring each other up by mutual encouragement, remembrance, and exhortation,—“Exhort one another daily.” The spirit which breathes through these words is diametrically the opposite of that of the old question put by the first murderer, “Am I my brother's keeper?” They assure us, in effect, that every man is in an important sense his brother's keeper; and that, especially among the members of the body of Christ, united by ties so close and endearing, there exists a sacred obligation to the duty exemplified and commended in those words of the Prophet, “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord harkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

It is not my intention, however, to view the words in this their wider scope and application. I have selected them in connection with a great practical evil, fearfully prevalent, I believe, among the families and households of the professing Christian Church—I mean the restraining of free and confidential spiritual intercourse among the nearest relatives, on the things belonging to their everlasting peace. The following extract from the writings of an eminent divine, living among us, will show that I am not alone in my impressions about the prevalence of this evil. It is from his Lectures on the Romans, in the comment on these words, “I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

“Thus, by an inexplicable peculiarity of temperament, do the nearest of relatives often maintain on that topic which most nearly concerns them, a dead and immoveable silence, and which for the world they cannot break; and though posting on to eternity together, yet on all the prospects and on all the preparations of eternity their lips are sealed; and while on every other partnership, whether of interest or of feeling, there is the frankest and the easiest communication, yet, on this mightiest interest of all, each wraps himself in his own impregnable disguise, and positively dares not lay it open. It is so very singular, that it almost looks like a satanic influence—a sorcery by which the prince of darkness obstructs this sort of reciprocal interchange in families, lest his kingdom should suffer by it—a device by which he guards the very approaches of conversation: and so scares even the devout and desirous Christian away from it, that he stands speechless and awe-struck even in the presence of his own brother.”

Assuming, then, the fact of the existence of the restraint in question I am anxious to look at it with you for a little, under the following aspects of it: *First*, The evil and mischievous character of it; *second*, The causes of it; and *third*, The remedies for it. The Lord make our meditations on these things very profitable to us all!

I. The evil of the restraining among near relatives of free intercourse about their souls, is evident from this, first of all, (1.) That it is a breach of God's express command in the text, “Exhort one another daily.” Of course, if this duty lies on professing Christians simply as such, independently of any peculiar ties existing among them, much more must it be obligatory on those united in near and endearing bonds, as husband and wife, brother and sister, parent and child. The Lord, in the text, enjoins all that belong to him, while the day of grace lasts, and in remembrance of their common weakness, and the exceeding deceitfulness of sin, to stir each other up by mutual warning, consolation, reproof, encouragement, exhortation. In the case of those living together in the same household, this duty, binding in all cases, only acquires an additional weight and emphasis of obligation analogous to what the Apostle marks with regard to temporal things, in the words, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” The restraint in question is a transgression of God's express and emphatic command. (2.) The evil of it appears in that it involves, I suspect to a very large extent,<sup>a</sup> the sin and crime of being ashamed of Christ and of his words. How is it possible to avoid this conclusion? Whence that strange silence, that dread, that awe-struck air in the presence of a brother? If it were before a stranger, one might

try to account for it in different ways. It might be imagined, for instance, to spring from a fear lest he, destitute himself of the fear of God, should be injured rather than profited by any testimony of ours borne to Christ,—a plausible plea this, though often, I believe, very hollow and worthless even in that case. But this will not do among persons accustomed to open their minds freely on every other subject but this alone. Silence here at once and irresistibly suggests the idea of shame,—shame, alas ! of Christ,—of Him of whom Paul exclaims, “ God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.” Ah, we shall do well, if higher motives will not move us, to remember that word of Jesus, “ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” (3.) This restraint cuts off all the precious innumerable benefits which God intended to arise from the exhortation enjoined in the text, and which in families were all the greater, in virtue of the constant opportunities and peculiar facilities there afforded for it—it cuts them all off. What daily consolation, what instruction, what warning, what encouragement, what direction, are thus lost for ever ! I have spoken of the breach of God’s command. But he did not give the command as of mere authority, but for the most beneficent objects and ends connected with the church’s and the world’s salvation. He knew the exceeding deceitfulness of the heart and of sin. He knew our fearful proneness, even after we have tasted that he is gracious, to depart away from him. “ Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God ;” but, as a remedy against it, “ exhort one another daily while it is called to-day ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” By this strange, miserable restraint, all these precious benefits are intercepted, and cut off ; and all the opposite evils against which it was intended to be a check, are left to flow in in full tide, unchecked and unrestrained. (4.) There is a specially mischievous effect produced by it on the children of a family. Of course, they lose all the benefits that might arise to their souls, directly, though gradually and insensibly, from free intercourse about spiritual things passing, among those they love, daily under their eye. But this is not what I point to. The absence of it throws a fearful stumbling block in their way. A child is able to understand how things which are nearest the heart, are not usually the farthest from the lips ; how people who feel much interest about any subject, cannot easily avoid speaking of it to each other. Well, family worship is kept up, we shall say, morning and evening. Then comes the world. Then God, and Christ, and heaven, and prayer, and the soul’s salvation,

are all put by—seem, by a kind of tacit consent, to be laid aside for the day. Is heaven a reality? Is Christ indeed beloved? Is the soul imperishable? The faith of the child, such as it is, is gradually sapped and undermined. All that the foolish inconsistent parent is building up with one hand, he is himself, by this restraint, effectually weakening and destroying with the other. (5.) I only farther remark here, that near relatives are, by this restraint, deprived of one of the mightiest incentives to a holy life. I do not refer to the direct influence of the unfettered intercourse; that belongs to a previous particular. But I allude to its indirect power in engaging the parties, unavoidably making them feel committed to God and to each other, in exact proportion to the sacredness of their communications, and the freedom with which they are interchanged, to a life of universal holiness. Ah, I suspect this lies nearer the root of the whole evil—this committing of each other—than might at first view appear. Of this a little more immediately. But, meanwhile, it is very plain that, if near relatives were freely conversing together of God and of his Christ, of his love, of their duty, of Scripture, of heaven, in their family circle, at their meals, in their brief seasons, it might be, of leisure and retirement—it could not fail mightily to engage them, and very happily and irrevocably commit them to a higher, a more holy and blameless life. Yea, the very communication itself would in fact be just an implicit vow to the effect of those words of David, “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way; O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”

II. But let us now inquire very shortly into the *causes* of that restraint, of which we have endeavoured to mark the evil and mischievous character. I believe that the much esteemed divine, whose words I read at the outset, spoke but the plain truth when he said that “it looked almost like a satanic influence, by which the prince of darkness contrived to obstruct this sort of reciprocal interchange in families, lest his kingdom should suffer by it.” No doubt the God of this world has much to do with this matter. Under him, however, it is clear that one leading cause of the restraint is to be sought, (1.) In the unregenerate condition of too many parents, and other near relatives, professing religion. They cannot speak of Christ, because they are ignorant of him. They cannot commend him to others, because they have never themselves embraced him. His name is seldom in their lips, because he himself is not in their hearts. The world is their theme, because it is their treasure, their God. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;” “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” O beloved, how is it with us in this matter? Are we living Christians or



no? Let us not seek for causes lying comparatively on the surface, while the seat of the disease may be at the heart, in the very vitals, in a soul "dead in trespasses and sins." There is no doubt, however, that this restraint prevails to a melancholy degree even among the children of God. And, therefore, we must look for other causes, short of an unconverted state and character. (2.) I observe, secondly, under this head, that careless inconsistent walking before God and each other, among near relatives, is one painful and powerful cause. Persons professing godliness, united in very endearing ties, are not careful to order their lives in each others sight, entirely as becomes the gospel. Each is conscious of this secretly in himself, and perceives it in the other; and there are two distinct ways in which this operates to the restraining of communication about spiritual things. Honesty, in the first place, forbids it. It is felt that it were hypocrisy, in such circumstances, to talk of Chrst's love and of his law, unless, at least, it were with the avowed design of committing the parties to an immediate change. If they are not prepared for this, the words of piety would be choaked in the very utterance. Indeed, spiritual conversation is neither possible nor desirable in such circumstances. And thus observe how it is, again, that if the parties are not prepared for rising to a higher standard and tone of living, they will restrain religious conversation more or less, it may be unconsciously, just that they may not be engaged and committed to a course on which they are not prepared to enter. Strange and melancholy thought! that thus those inconsistencies, which are in the first instance a cause of this restraint, become in their turn a fruit of it—are fearfully deepened and perpetuated by it, inasmuch as the parties are deprived, as we saw, under the last head, of the unspeakable benefit of *being* committed, before God and each other, to their removal, and to a life of universal holiness. But still farther, (3.) and in close connection with inconsistent walking, yet distinct from it, I believe that the chief cause of the restraint in question among the people of God is to be found in the want of soul-prosperity, and of a close and habitual intercourse in secret with God and his blessed Word. This is distinct from inconsistent walking; for, though there cannot assuredly be prosperity of soul where there is such walking, yet, on the other hand, there may not be inconsistent walking in the ordinary sense of that expression, and yet there may be very little soul-prosperity. There may be a low and carnal state of soul, far from the spirit of that word, "Enoch walked with God;" and that word, "I rejoiced at thy Word as one that hath found great spoil;" and that one, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and that one, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." There may be a state of soul that

will either close the lips about God altogether in the daily intercourse of the family, or make anything that may be uttered so cold, and stiff, and unnatural, as possibly to be worse than entire silence. O! it is the spiritually prosperous soul, warmed with the love of Christ, that alone can speak of him or for him to any purpose. It is the man who cannot *but* speak of Divine things that alone will speak of them to much use. It is the Christian who has come forth from his closet breathing the air of heaven, the Word of Christ dwelling richly in him, and the hope of glory animating and cheering him—it is he who naturally and easily, without any stiffness or constraint, will speak of the things which he has seen and heard; “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” “These words which I command thee this day *shall be in thine heart*; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Is the restraint we are discoursing of so very strange a thing, after all? Strange assuredly, that, at this day, at this period of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the interests of vital godliness should be so low among us! But being as they are, the restraint follows necessarily, partly an effect, and partly in its turn a cause. The want, in short, of religion, or the low state of it, are the real causes of this evil.

III. And thus, *finally*, there can be little difficulty in discovering and noticing the *remedies*, under God, for the evil. These must take their character from the causes. For example, (1.) I besought you to ask yourselves, as in God’s sight, whether ye were Christ’s indeed. If the cause of the evil should lie in an unregenerate heart, God forbid we should “daub with untempered mortar,” attempt to heal the hurt of your souls slightly, or propose any surface remedies, while the disease lies at the vitals. The only remedy in such a case is to get into Christ, to obtain a new heart, to flee from the wrath to come, to the Lord Jesus, the hope set before you in the gospel, “the resurrection and the life.” And so again (2.) If the cause lie with you in careless and inconsistent walking, whatever other remedies you may employ, let that command be heard, “Put away the strange gods which are among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only.” Search out and remove the accursed thing, the Achan, that interferes with your free communication about the things of God. “If we walk,” says John, the Apostle, “in the light, as he is in the light, we have *fellowship one with another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every *man’s* work, pass the time of your sojourning here in

fear, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance ; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." And especially, (3.) in the third place, seek the remedy for this evil in a closer walk with God, in a more habitual, living fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in a nearer and more intimate converse with this blessed volume. All will be in vain without this. This, next to conversion, is pre-eminently *the* remedy for the evil—a prosperous soul, a heart breathing, burning with the love of Christ—a mind richly stored with the truths and the words of the Lord Jesus. Which leads me to say finally, (4.) offering one or two closing hints towards that fuller and franker communication on spiritual things, so much in Christian families to be desired. Let Scripture texts be made very frequent use of as the materials of conversation. There is a Divine fitness and mighty power in the Word of God for this purpose, if we would only trust it. Different plans might be taken here—as, for instance, each in a family circle, when they have met for some meal, perhaps in the morning, might repeat a verse of Scripture—by way of suggesting materials of thought, providing food for the soul, throwing out subjects of pleasing and useful intercourse. But whatever the plan be, or whether there be any fixed plan at all, the Scriptures will afford endless facilities and means of communication ; and even as to those the most disposed to complain of the lack of materials, I will venture to say that a little courage, with but simple texts, chosen with a moderate degree of judgment, may soon, in a very great measure, overcome the whole difficulty. Passing incidents, also, ought to be viewed in their connection with Providence, and to be marked accordingly. Mercies, afflictions, difficulties, duties, and trials in prospect, will all furnish to a spiritual mind topics of natural remark. Courage will often require to be exercised by those united in the nearest bonds, to get at the most vital and personal concerns of the soul. Let stiffness also be carefully shunned, and all austerity and gloom. It were well if love, still more than even faithfulness, were the moving spring and principle of the whole ; and, in one word, let us never be satisfied with our state of mind till we can assure ourselves that our chief desires and anxieties for those most dear to us, are really and unquestionably engaged about their spiritual and everlasting welfare. "Exhort one another daily." "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and the Lord harkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Amen.

## SERMON VII.

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER.

BY THE REV. ANDREW A. BONAR, COLLACE.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."—JOHN vi. 38-40.

NONE of the Evangelists or Apostles speak so much of the Father as John, who knew most of his Son Jesus Christ, and leant upon his bosom. The reason is, John felt that the mind of *the Father* and the mind of *the Son* were the same—entirely the same. He was, therefore, engaged in the same topic when he unfolded the Father's love.

It is remarkable that it is this apostle who records what Jesus revealed concerning the Father, and how Jesus delighted to point his disciples to him. Thus, he shows us in the context, verse 37, that Jesus went into the secret of his pavilion when his soul was grieved by the perverse unbelief of men. In that hour, when Jesus could find no refreshment in the men around him, he turned back for a moment's joy to the Father's love. "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me!*" He bathes his soul in that depth of eternal love. He surveys those given to him—Abel, and the saints of his age—Abraham, and his faithful ones—Peter, John, Mary, Lydia—the few in Sardis—the souls under the altar—and, as he surveys them, he sees his Father's love sparkle from each one, for these are his Father's gift; and forthwith his own love overflows on all that stand by. He flashes out his own love when he in the same moment cries, "*And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" It seems that in that hour he thought upon the future. He saw, as he uttered the words, "*All whom the Father giveth me,*" how man would be prone to take this reference to the Father's love as indicating a difference between the grace of the Father and of the Son. He saw that many would say, that Jesus damped the rising hope of the coming sinner when he said, "*All that the Father giveth me,*" and therefore does he forthwith cast out that other cord of love, "*And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.*" So great is my Father's

love to me and to perishing men, that assuredly there shall be souls that come to me; and so great is my love and his love alike, that no coming one shall on any account be cast out.

Dear brethren, if the snow had never lain on the tops of Lebanon, Jordan would never have been full or overflowing. There would have been no Saviour's grace for man to know and feel, if the Father had not "so loved the world" as to give us his only begotten. Yet often is the Father's love suspected or forgotten, although he is the fountain-head, and all the streams of grace have had their source in him. "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.*" James i. 17. O brethren, we should love him as Jesus did. Come and see what wondrous reason there is why we should do so.

1. *The Father's amazing love appears in his sparing this guilty world, though he spared not the angels that sinned.*—You know that it is the Father's part to arrange, and purpose, and decree—it is his to decide and appoint whatsoever cometh to pass. Now, in a past eternity, he had the case of this fallen world under consideration. He might have decreed immediate woe as soon as sin should be committed by men. For sin deserves not only *eternal*, but *immediate* curse; and he had seen meet so to determine in regard to those angels who should leave "their first habitation." But the barren fig-tree was spared—this most guilty world received a day of grace. It became the very theatre for the display of long-suffering; so that our text exhibits to us the Son of God walking on a spared world, digging at the roots of its barren trees. "Herein is love!" For to spare this whole world for a time, implied the intention of enduring man's rebellion and man's unceasing provocations, for at least six thousand years. It was equivalent to the Father saying, "Lo! I will submit to bear man's apostacy—to allow him to provoke the eyes of my glory—to wag his head at me and say, 'Can he see through the dark cloud?'—to cast up mire and the very filth of hell upon my pure white throne—nay, to aim at erasing my love from my own heart, and even strike at my own being!" O did it not require love ineffable ere this could be resolved upon! This guilty world's day of grace is a most marvellous proof and manifestation of Jehovah's depth of love. And, thou wicked and slothful servant, who sayest, "*He is an austere master,*" shalt be confounded for ever. The Father needs do no more than point to this time of most undeserved long-suffering. You speak of mercy; and some of you say, He could not be a God of mercy if he cast away so many souls; but already has his treatment of you displayed his mercy. Your day of grace proves him to be

a loving God. O man, see to it before you are summoned to the Judgment Seat; for your plea, drawn from his mercy, is already dismissed. "What will you do in the day of visitation?" You abuse your day—you sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play—you dance before your golden calf—and then complain of a long-suffering God, because his mercy bears with you only for a lifetime, and will not wink at your sin to all eternity!

II. *The Father's amazing love appears in choosing some of this guilty world, who should certainly be to the praise of his glory.*—Our text refers to this in the expression, "*All that the Father hath given me.*" And so at other times—"Thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6; and "The men whom thou hast given me;" "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Eph. i. 5, 6.

Now, there was a mystery of love in this election. It lies in the fact that, but for this further determination of the Father, none of our world would after all have been saved. To give men full liberty to come and be saved is love indeed. To procure and provide a ransom available for all who do come, whatever they be, is love yet higher still. But love can ascend to a height beyond this—far beyond it. It has ascended infinitely higher, for it has resolved to draw many, many thousands to itself, who otherwise would not have come at all. The Lord saw, dear brethren, that none in all this world would have come—not one shipwrecked man would ever have swam to shore, for he hated the shore more than the very waves that lashed him. No manslayer would have crossed the threshold of the city of refuge; he would rather linger in the open plain and risk the blow of the avenger. No debtor would have deigned to accept the payment—no captive to receive the ransom; even though all was free—even though entreated to do so by God himself—even though hell was behind, and heaven before.

The world's corruption was deep beyond conception. Earth was an open sepulchre; and each man hated his God. It was in reference to what he saw of this fearful enmity that Jesus said, in melancholy pity, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John vi. 44. They are so totally depraved, they are so wedded to their lusts, they are so gross, and sensual—so truly dead in sin—they do not wish to be freed from their covetousness, their envy, their lust, their power to draw draughts of pleasure from ungodly revelry, or from

intense engrossment with the lawful occupations of life. They hide among the trees of the garden at the first sound of the voice of the Lord, even when he comes with grace on his lips, and goodwill to men in his heart.

O brethren, to be able to love any of such a race, argues strange and mysterious depth of love in God the Father. And he did fix his love on many of these; he did it freely, and he did it determinedly. So deliberate, decided, determined was this eternal love of the Father, that it made success certain in the case of each on whom it was fixed. It was such a love, that its plans and purposes implied the operation of each person of the Godhead. The *Spirit* must go forth and draw, and the *Son* go forth and die. This was the Father's plan! O what amazing love is here! What thoughts are in his heart to usward! He will not let go his purpose of having some of our fallen race standing round his throne.

1. *Anxious souls!* Surely the God that would do this from all eternity, is a God of infinite grace. What a bosom is this to lean upon!—what an inducement to draw near! Does it not confirm you in the belief of that declaration, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out!" He who makes such provision to ensure that many shall come, is one who will in nowise reject any that are coming!

2. *Unawakened men!* There is nothing in the character of God that can account for your treatment of him;—there is nothing in him or his ways that can excuse your hatred. It is the fearful depravity of your own souls that alone can account for your utter ungodliness. Your blood is on your own heads! Your heart may be as *deceitful* as it is *wicked*, so that you may not believe your own deplorable state of enmity; but Jehovah has said by the lips of his Son concerning all that thus resist him, "Ye have hated me without a cause!"

III. *The Father's amazing love appears in his giving Christ to be the sinner's way of salvation.*—It was he who made a new and living way for a sinner's return to him. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life;" verse 40. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish;" John iii. 16. And hence the name given him in 2 Cor. i. 3, "*The Father of mercies*;" and in Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his Son."

Had he for once caused one ray of the inaccessible light to shoot down to this earth in order to teach us our state of darkness—had he shown us one crown worn above, or one triumphal palm—had he caused us to

hear one note of heavenly melody—all this would have left us inexcusable, if we did not ever after covet earnestly the things above. But he took the best gift in all his treasures; nay, he took the Son that was in his bosom, and gave him to man. Angels saw it done, and rapturously sang, "To you is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!" and all men that have had anointed eyes have responded as they gazed, "To us a child is born! unto us a son is given!" It is by this measuring-line that you must fathom the depth of the ocean. It is by this fact that you must try to measure the unsearchable love of the Father. You test your fellow-creatures' love by the sacrifices they would make for you. You judge of Abraham's love to his God by his sacrifice of Isaac. Now judge of the love of the Father by his gift of his Son.

It was the Father saying, "I cannot give up my law and my holiness; for that would be ceasing to be God. I cannot hide my righteousness and resign its demands; for that would ruin all. I cannot put the burden on my angels; for they could not bear it one hour. I cannot leave it on man; for then, not one of them should ever stand before me. But this is my will. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd; let man be dipt in the blood of the Almighty's fellow!" He not only gave him, but substituted him in the room of the guilty—"the just for the unjust to bring us unto God."

Brethren, the Father resolved that *all salvation* shall be found in the Son. He carefully avoided leaving any of the details of salvation for us to perform. The Father was he who provided that the chastisement of our peace should be laid upon another; and no atoning tears left for us to shed—no atoning suffering left for us to endure—not one atoning sigh left for us to heave. Therefore, "it pleased *the Lord* to bruise *him*; he put *him* to grief," Isaiah liii. 10; and this he did with such calm, decided love, that the appeal of his beloved Son to him, "*Father* if it be possible, let this cup pass," served only to manifest his long-settled and unchanging plan.

He had resolved that he should have children and sons from among men; but he had further resolved, that their way of becoming his children and sons should all express his love. It was to be free; they were to come to him from the far country "in a chariot paved with love." All he asked of them was, that they should ascend the chariot and be carried home; for as many as received Jesus were at once to receive the privilege of sons of God. "Behold, what manner of love the *Father* hath bestowed on us, that we should be called sons of God," John iii. 1; but equally amazing that we should become sons in a way so free. It costs Jesus all; it costs us nothing. Every drop of the vial falls on Jesus, and not even the dregs are left. Every arrow that was needed



to express the Lord's hatred of sin and vindicate his law, sinks into the heart of Jesus, and is aimed at him by the Father's hand! All penalties are exacted of him; all obedience is rendered by him; and all this is done according to, and in exact fulfilment of, the Father's purpose of love to us. These are just the thoughts of the Father toward us, carried out into accomplishment.

Now, brethren, the Father, having given us this way and warrant for coming to him, manifests his love yet more by shutting you up to the necessity of taking this one way, this only warrant. "Every one that hath heard and learnt of the Father cometh unto me," John vi. 45, said Jesus; and "no man cometh unto the Father but by me," xiv. 6. You are reduced to the necessity of being saved by a free salvation. It is written, "*Him hath God the Father sealed*;" vi. 27. He has made Jesus to be your Joseph; he has given him the royal signet. When you cry for bread, he says to all, "Go to Joseph;" Genesis xli. 55. Jesus has the seal of the Father. O with such a warrant, and going to one whose love is such that it planned this way, one whose bosom is filled with calm, determined, eternal love, can you hesitate as to duty? Can you hesitate as to the way of safety? Nothing but enmity on your part, and deep-rooted dislike, can account for your resting contented without possession of the Father's gift. What more will you venture to say the Father ought to have given? See what he has already given, and given without any claim on your part. If you are lost, your ruin will lie on yourself. Will ever your blasphemous lips dare to lay your damnation to the charge of such a God? Oh, fall in with his plan of grace! The plan that such a God proposes, must be one worthy of such a sinner's immediate acceptance. And *immediate acceptance* is the only manner in which such a sinner can shew any due sense of the *free grace* of his God.

You who do already believe, be reminded that it is to the Father you owe all your peace, and joy, and blessed assurance of eternal life. You were once far off; and once you were only anxiously wishing to find his favour. But he showed your anxious souls his economy of grace—he brought you to drink of his living waters that are without price—he spread out the warrant before your eyes, and you were made to see that there was nothing left for you to complete. The Father's plan was so gracious, that, in seeing the Son, you saw a finished salvation. Oh, give glory evermore at once to "*Him—that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.*"

IV. *The amazing love of the Father appears in his revealing himself to us.*—He does not act through an interpreter only, but he makes

himself known. He gives us, as it were, the means of searching and trying his heart, that we may be quite sure of his whole mind towards us, and that his matchless character may draw our souls to himself.

He does this through the incarnation of Jesus. For we are told in our text, "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me,"—that is, not to exercise any separate will of mine as man, but as man to exhibit and to do the Father's will. All, therefore, that is in Christ, expresses the mind of his Father also. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me;" John xiv. 10. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." John xiv. 9.

O brethren, there is manifold love in his revelation to us of the Father. It is not only that our suspicious hearts would never have been quite at rest unless we had thus known the Father also; but it gives us a view of his willingness to condescend to us in any way that may more fully draw us, or be more likely to induce us to love "the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength." He seems herein to come out of his "light inaccessible," that he may become known to his fallen creatures. This is like humiliation; it is the Father's condescension. If Solomon, in order to engage the confidence of some loathsome leper, had come forth in all his glory, in his royal apparel, and with his golden sceptre, then would all the land have rung with the story of his condescending kindness. And it is not less that our God has done. He has come forth that we might know him. He has put on the robe of humanity, wherein he could be best looked upon by our mortal eye, and he has shewn himself in all his grace and attractive love to a fallen world.

Herein is love! the Father will go to the utmost length in order to draw you back from the pit. Like the Grecian mother who, by her song, drew back her wilful child from the edge of the awful precipice, and brought it to her bosom secure; so the Lord, by the discovery of his infinitely glorious and gracious nature, would draw you from your sin. He would present to your idolatrous and adulterous eyes a sight more attractive than earth, in its softest forms, can furnish. He would keep you back from hell, O sinner, by manifesting himself to you as altogether lovely! O how deep is your corruption! How strong your enmity! How unconquerable your perversity! You hate *God*, after seeing him revealed in Jesus! Every exhibition of greatness, mingled with grace in Jesus, was the revelation of the *Father* also! Every discovery of patience, long-suffering, and grieved love—every time Jesus went apart to weep in secret places for the pride of men, it was the Father's feeling also. When Jesus beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it, O there was a tender pity there that just pictured forth the Father's yearning compassion—as if

the Father himself had come forth from the "light inaccessible," and had spoken in the hearing and sight of men, "*How shall I give thee up, Ephraim; how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim?*"

Nor is it less the Father's mind, when Jesus cries in your ears, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." This is the Father's will who has sent him. As if he knew that you might say, on hearing that it is certain that all shall come who are given to Christ, "Ah, then, perhaps though I were to come, I would not be welcomed," the Saviour says, and the Father speaks by his lips, "Him that cometh I will *in nowise* cast out." You shall never be rejected, if you come—never on the ground that you were too great a sinner—never on the ground that, though you come, you were not given to Christ. "You shall *in nowise* be cast out." Any question regarding the Father's secret purposes, or the Father's accurate fore-knowledge of who are his own—any question of this sort is quite out of your province. It is *friends* who get acquainted with the *secrets* of another's heart; it is not strangers. You are to come on the strength of the *warrant alone*; and so you will become a friend and a child of his family, and be no more cast out.

V. *The Father's amazing love appears in appointing the eternal reward for redeemed sinners.*—Our text says, "I came down to do the will of him that sent me," and "*this is the Father's will* that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day;" John vi. 39. Therefore, says Jesus, "I *will* raise him up at the last day;" verse 40.

It is remarkable how the Father delights to honour the Son while wearing our nature. It is of him in our nature, nay, in the act of bearing away, like the scape-goat, our sins on his person, that it is written, "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, and take it up again." John x. 17. It is in our nature that he is to judge, and to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess when he appears, clothed in our nature, and wearing the many crowns of this earth's dominion. Now, love to *him in our nature* is love to *us*. O, then, brethren, read here the *Father's* delight in our race. He takes our nature, in the person of Jesus, to his nearest presence; he sheds round it, in the person of Jesus, his brightest beams; he places it on his right hand in majesty.

But farther, it is written here, that the rising of the believers in the resurrection of the just is appointed of the Father—"that he should raise it up again at the last day." It is he who has purposed the glorious triumph over death, which believers gain in the resurrection morn.

It is he who planned that they should live and reign with Christ, blessed and holy, children of the first resurrection, and never subject to the second death. It is he who blesses them; for the King shall say, "Come ye blessed of *my Father*;" Matthew xxv. 34. It is he who bestows the kingdom upon them; "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me;" Luke xxii. 29. It is he who gives them power over the nations; for Christ in giving his power says, "Even as I received of my Father;" Revelations ii. 27. It is the Father who introduces them to the glory of Christ; John xvii. 24. It is in the *Father's* house they dwell—in his many mansions; John xiv. 2. And even as Jesus went to the Father, so do they; for they are "with him where he is," in the immediate presence of the Father.

Thus, brethren, every token of love, in that blessed kingdom, bears the impress of the Father's grace. Every glory there sparkles with beams of the Father's love. O what a God of love is our God. And it is to his bosom the returning sinner comes. Sweet and blessed hope! to be near him, to try the depths of his heart—to have access through Jesus in our nature to his bosom—and so to be able to pour out our heart to him, and feel him pour out his to us. This is life eternal.

A child of God once asked, in meditating on the words—"Where thou causest thy flock to rest"—where this resting-place might be thought to be? One said, "In Jesus." But the other replied, "It is even in the Father's bosom." And truly this is a believer's deepest rest. "By him we believe in God," 1 Peter i. 21, that is, the Father; and "we come unto God by him;" Heb. vii. 25. It is your place of rest, believer. It is the inner apartment of the pavilion—the secret of the tent. It is the farthest off spot from earth, it is out of sight of its pleasures, joys, gain, ambition. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, *the love of the Father is not in him*;" 1 John ii. 15. "Little children, ye *have known the Father*;" verse 13.

O beloved, before I conclude, let me once more cast out the cords of love to draw the rebellious among you. This God is our God. This is he who assures you of his desire for your salvation, "I have no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord, but rather that he turn from his ways and live." You are the worm that tried to crawl up to his throne, and to sit down as sovereign, and yet he has not crushed you! Your bosom is the seat of fearful sin, hatred of the holy one, dark suspicions of his sincerity, fond plans of self-exaltation, selfish schemes for present indulgence, ungodly fancies, sensual, earthly, devilish desires. Yet still our God, even *the Father*, laments over you. He takes no blame to himself for your wretched degradation; for, on the contrary, he has at every step cast hindrances in your way to hell. He

laments over you, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found!" He loved Jesus all the more for dying and rising again (John x. 17), because it opened up the channel of love; it gave vent to his love to man. Only draw near and see this ocean. It is the same ocean of love which is seen when you look on a dying Saviour; but it is the same ocean seen from another point of view. And what can exceed the power of the appeal which God hereby makes to you, when he declares, "*That* it is not the love of the Son alone, but the unbought, free, eternal love of Godhead!" It is the *Father* who lays down Jesus for a foundation-stone, and cries to a careless world, "Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone." It is the *Father* who calls and invites, "Behold! my servant whom I have chosen! mine elect in whom *my soul* delighteth!" It is the Father who points to the cross and cries to all the earth, "I, even I am he who blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." This is the Father's will, and Christ himself is the herald that proclaims it to a lost world, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life!"

## SERMON VIII.

CHRIST, THE BUILDER AND RULER OF THE TEMPLE.

( Preached at the opening of the Free Church, Burntisland, Dec. 10. 1843. )

BY THE REV. DAVID COUPER, BURNTISLAND.

" Even he shall build the temple of the Lord ; and he shall bear the glory."—ZECH. vi. 13.

Of whom does the Prophet speak when he affirms that He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory ? Of one who is styled a *man* ;—of one, therefore, who is partaker of the same nature with ourselves—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. But can a mere man bear or possess the glory of the temple of the Lord ? Impossible. God will not give his glory to another : his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. But of the *man* here spoken of it is further affirmed that " his name is the Branch, and that he shall grow up out of his place." Compare this statement with kindred predictions of former prophets, and observe the light which is thus reflected on it. . Isaiah says, " There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Isaiah xi. 1. The text then must be viewed as referring to one who should belong to the tribe of Judah and the family of David. Additional light is thrown upon the subject by the prophet Jeremiah. " Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely : and this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6. The Branch, then, that was to grow out of the root of Jesse was to be more than man ; for who could bear that wondrous name, " The Lord our Righteousness," but the Lord himself ? To apply such a title to a mere child of humanity, or even to the loftiest of angelic spirits, were to rob Jehovah of his glory, and to give it to another. Thus we are shut up to the conclusion that the text refers to one who should combine in his own person the fulness of divinity with all that is essential to the constitution of our nature ; and thus there is brought before us the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. It is of

Jesus that the Prophet speaks : He is the man whose name is the Branch. In the fulness of time he sprung *as man* out of the stem of Jesse ; and the Branch had begun to " grow out of his place " when the angel of the Lord proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem, " Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." He is the Eternal Word, who took upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and who, as Mediator, bears this precious and glorious title, " The Lord our Righteousness." Is it surprising, then, to hear it affirmed of the man whose name is the Branch, not only that he should build the temple of the Lord, but that he should bear the glory ?

Two interesting topics, closely connected with each other, and deserving of special attention in our present circumstances, are brought before us in the text. The first is, *the work ascribed to Christ* ; and the second, *the glory which he derives from it*. Let us enter on the consideration of these topics with devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit, that the first proclamation of the truth within these walls may not be made in vain, but may enter with power into the souls of all that hear it, and so redound to the glory of the Church's living Head.

I. The work here ascribed to Christ first demands our notice—" He shall build the temple of the Lord."

These words were spoken by Zechariah to Joshua the High Priest, who, in connection with Zerubbabel, was employed in rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem. Joshua, by reason of his office, was a type of Christ, but did not like Christ sustain both the kingly and the priestly offices. On the occasion, however, on which this prediction was delivered, he typified Christ both as a priest and as a king ; for the prophet was commanded, before delivering the Lord's message, to make two crowns, and set them on his head. Under the Levitical economy, the High Priest wore a crown on which was inscribed, " Holiness to the Lord ;" and you are aware that in ancient times a crown was the badge of royalty, as it has continued to be to the present day. Joshua, therefore, when the two crowns were set upon his head, was a manifest and striking type of him who is at once the High Priest and the King of Zion, and of whom it is said in the words following the text, " He shall be a priest upon his throne ;" and, as the person of Joshua typified that of Christ, so the work to which Joshua was called was typical of that which Christ was to accomplish. The former was called to prosecute the building of an earthly temple ; the latter also was to be the builder of a temple—very different, however, in its nature from that which conferred lustre and distinction on Jerusalem—constructed, not of earthly materials, but of living stones—adorned throughout with the beauty of

holiness—and chosen by the Lord as his much-loved habitation. This temple is the Church of the Redeemer—the Church universal, consisting of all who in every age and nation are washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; hence it is said by an Apostle, speaking of the Lord Jesus, “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” And to the same effect it is said by another Apostle, “Ye are the temple of the living God.” “Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

Why the Church is called a temple it is not difficult to perceive. It is so called in allusion to the sacred edifice, which, by Divine command, was erected in Jerusalem. That edifice was dedicated to the service of God, and so are all those who believe in Jesus. They feel that they are not their own, and they are taught to glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his. In the Jewish temple, the Lord was pleased to reveal his glory; and so he does in the Church, but more spiritually and more fully. He manifests himself to all that love and serve him. While the eyes of other men are darkened by the influence of sin, *their* eyes are opened to discern the Divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The Jewish temple was regarded as God’s residence, for the visible emblem of his glory dwelt between the cherubims. And is not his life-giving presence with his Church on earth? Has he not promised to be always with his people? In the one temple, were observed the rites which he was pleased to institute; in the other, he is worshipped in spirit and truth. The world withholds from him its homage. Every unbeliever does so, whether outwardly connected with the Church or not. Those only who believe with the heart unto righteousness are his true worshippers. It is the Church which they constitute, that offers up to him the sacrifices of righteousness, and the grateful incense of praise and supplication. Most fitly, then, is it styled “the temple of the Lord.”

Now, of this temple Jesus is the builder. Before a structure can be reared, the foundation must be laid; and Christ has laid the foundation of his Church. He *virtually* laid it in the counsels of eternity, when he undertook to accomplish the work of our redemption; and he *actually* laid it in the fulness of time, when he obeyed and suffered in our stead. He is himself the rock on which his Church is built; and on what other foundation could the temple of the Lord have stood unshaken and secure? Not on a foundation laid by man; for that, like man himself, would have been unstable as the sand. Not on a foundation laid by angels; for that,



being the work of creatures, could have had no virtue in itself to sustain the interests of a ruined world. None but Immanuel, God in our nature, could sustain this mighty load. What the strength of all creatures could never have achieved, he graciously undertook and accomplished to the full, although the work subjected him to humiliation and to suffering intense beyond conception. He satisfied the claims of eternal justice, and is therefore able to save unto the uttermost. O what cause of joy that the foundation laid in Zion is so firm and sure! No power in the universe can shake it; for it is laid by him who has all power in heaven and on earth.

On himself, then, as the foundation, Christ rears the spiritual temple referred to in the text. This he does by the instrumentality of his Word, and by the agency of his Spirit. He sends forth his Word as the means of converting the souls of men; and for this end he sends forth his Spirit to make the Word effectual. What is the state of a sinner's soul before the truth reaches it in demonstration of the Spirit? Though under the condemnation of a broken law, it is either in a state of supine indifference, or it is under the dominion of a spirit of self-righteousness. It is defiled, moreover, with the pollution of iniquity—estranged from the living God—wedded to the idols of time and sense—enslaved by its own propensities, and by the power of Satan. What is the result when the truth is applied to it by the Spirit of Christ? It is awakened from its death-like slumber—it becomes alive to the awful realities of its condition, as an outcast from the family of God, and an heir of the wrath which is treasured up for the rebellious. The props on which it leaned are all driven from underneath it. Of the refuges wherein it trusted, one after another is felt to be a wretched mockery; and thus the hopes which it cherished all vanish into nothing, like morning dreams. Meanwhile, the sword of Divine justice is impending over it; and whether can it flee for refuge? Where can it find a place of security and rest? No rest or safety can it find, until, forsaking every refuge of its own, it take up its position on the broad and firm ground of the Mediator's righteousness. And when the Spirit discloses to it the excellency of Christ, and the sovereign freeness of his salvation, it takes hold on him by the hand of faith, and from all its weary wanderings it rests on the ground of his finished work. Henceforth, it ceases to be an outcast and accursed thing. It becomes a stone in the temple of the Lord; for it is built on the foundation that is laid in Zion.

But is this all? No, my brethren. The soul, when united to the Saviour, undergoes a thorough change of character as well as of condition. A worthless stone may be placed on a pedestal of the purest marble or the finest gold, but it remains worthless still. The marble or the gold

cannot communicate its properties to that which touches it. But Christ imparts his virtues to the soul that rests on him as the foundation of its hope. He makes it a new creature. Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, it becomes a partaker of the Divine nature; for it is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of God. Unless it were sanctified as well as justified, it could have no place in the spiritual temple; for "the temple of God is holy." But Christ sanctifies it by his Word and Spirit, and thus it becomes a living stone, reflecting the glory of Christ himself. It is numbered with God's jewels; for there is written upon it, "Holiness unto the Lord."

Such, then, is the way in which Christ carries on the work that is here ascribed to him. As one sinner after another is converted, one living stone after another is added to the temple which he is building. Amid all the uproar and turmoil of this ungodly world, this work is silently but surely going on. Satan would stop it if he could, so would the world if it could; but neither earth nor hell is able to arrest it. Christ has undertaken to accomplish it; and it will not be suspended till "the head-stone be brought forth with shoutings, grace, grace, unto it." Already the temple is glorious in the eye of heaven. Angels look on it with wonder and delight; for "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." How glorious, then, shall the temple be, when the last living stone shall complete the harmony of its vast proportions! Then, purified from every soil, and resplendent with the beauties of righteousness and holiness, it shall stand out before the universe the noblest monument of the Divine perfections. Then shall be realised what was proclaimed to the beloved disciple by a great voice from heaven, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

What a signal honour to be fellow-workers with Christ in speeding on this blessed consummation! While for this end he has revealed his Word and sent forth his Spirit, he has also been pleased to ordain that men should be employed as instruments in building the temple of the Lord. It is his will that there should be pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The grand object of the Christian ministry is to win souls to Christ, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. Those entrusted with it are required to aim at nothing lower than the rearing up of that spiritual temple in which God

delights to dwell. How honourable their office; but, at the same time, how awfully responsible! Were it not that our sufficiency is of God, who could venture to undertake it without presumption the most daring? Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified—that we may be found faithful, and that you may be rooted and built up in Christ, and at length made pillars in the temple above. And that you may be stirred up to do so, cherish a profound sense of the sacred nature and the momentous issues of the ministerial office. Remember that its great object is to build up living stones on the Rock of Ages. This is a counsel which ought not at any time to be regarded as unseasonable, but which, at the present day, deserves to be pondered with peculiar care. I am verily persuaded that most of the troubles through which we have lately passed have originated in this, among other kindred causes,—viz., ignorance or inconsideration of the true nature and design of the Christian ministry. For, did men but view it seriously in the light of Scripture, and in connection with its bearings on the world to come, surely they would tremble at the thought of subjecting to the rude hand of merely secular authority the functions of an office so spiritual in its nature, and bearing so directly on the high interests of eternity.

II. But let us proceed to the consideration of the *second* topic brought before us in the text. We have adverted to the work here ascribed to Christ; let us now contemplate the glory which he derives from it.

Here it may be observed, *first*, that Christ bears the glory *as the builder of the temple*.

When you contemplate some vast and imposing structure, you can scarcely help reverting to the mind that planned it. You feel that a noble monument of human genius is before you: and, in truth, it is no small triumph of the skill of man to form out of the shapeless rock, that has lain for ages in the dark bosom of the earth, a structure which overawes the mind by its sublimity, and captivates the eye by the beauty of its ornaments, and the grace of its proportions. Hence it is that the name of many an individual, who has impressed the characters of his genius on the rude materials which the earth affords, has been handed down with honour through successive generations. But if men are thus rendered illustrious by their works, what shall we say of the glory which Christ derives from that temple which is here declared to be his workmanship? Take in but the single element of duration, and how unspeakably glorious does this work of his appear! The works of man, like himself, are perishable. Of the splendid monuments of ancient art, most have crumbled away under the wasting influence of time, or been

laid in ruins by the hand of violence. Where, for instance, is now the Temple of Jerusalem?—the ploughshare has passed over its foundations; every fragment of its magnificence has perished. But the temple of which Jesus is the builder, though he began to rear it in the early morning of the world, exhibits no symptoms of weakness or decay. The revolutions of the past have left it unimpaired; and it shall stand unshaken amid all the changes and convulsions of the future. Christ builds for eternity; and when this earth and these heavens shall have passed away his living temple will continue to exist as the monument of his glory.

There are many other lights in which this subject might be viewed. Think, for example, of the *wisdom* which this work of Christ displays. To rear a holy temple out of the ruins of human nature, is a problem which would have baffled all finite wisdom. For did it not seem as if the requisite materials were altogether wanting? Is it not the testimony of Scripture, and of experience too, that all have gone astray, that by nature there is none righteous—no, not one; that sin has extended its polluting influence to every soul of man? And how, with such materials as these, was it possible to build the temple of the Lord? Yet this is what Christ has actually done; and he has done it in a way consistent with all the perfections of the Godhead—not with that love only which compassionates the wretched, but with that truth which endureth for ever, with that holiness which cannot look upon iniquity, with that justice which will by no means clear the guilty. Here is wisdom—a wisdom whose operations are the study of angels, and whose depths they continually desire to look into.

Think also of the *power* by which this work of the Redeemer is effected, Divine power alone was equal to it. To form a golden palace out of a heap of clay were just as practicable to finite strength as to constitute into a living and holy Church souls, that were dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ changes the clay into gold. He creates the clean heart, and renews the right spirit. He makes holy what was utterly polluted: he makes precious what was altogether vile. He is thus constantly preparing materials for the enlargement of his temple, and he will not cease till the plans of his wisdom be fully executed by his power, in spite of all the opposition, both of earth and hell.

Think, further, of the *love* which Christ displays as the builder of the temple. God is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful; yet it is not said that God is wisdom, or that God is power—but it is said that God is love. Of all glory, therefore, that of love is the most transcendent. And O what a display of it bursts on the eye of the enlightened understanding, when it looks to Jesus building the temple of the Lord! For why does he stretch out the hand of his mercy to sinful men? Why does he take

them out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and wash them in his own blood, and sanctify them by his Word and Spirit, and give them a place in that temple which is the habitation of the Lord? And why for this very end did he veil his glory under the robe of human flesh, and endure the bitter cross, and lie down in the darkness of the grave? Because his is a love that passeth knowledge, a love that carries in it the fulness of infinity.

Give glory, then, to him who thus manifests his wisdom, and power, and love in building the temple of the Lord. Glory is continually ascribed to him by the heavenly host. Alas, that men should be so slow of heart to praise him! They celebrate the works and achievements of their fellows; but how seldom, amid the din and confusion of this world, is any voice heard celebrating the praises of Immanuel? Oh plead that his glory may shine upon your souls, so that with your lips and by your lives you may magnify his name; and forget not, brethren, what he says of all the true members of his Church. His language is, "I am glorified in them." Is it your desire that he may be glorified in you? Do you long to be partakers of his holiness? Are you seeking to honour him by walking worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called? Are you striving to keep yourselves from idols, with which, as Scripture reminds you, the temple of God hath no agreement? Let no man coldly and thoughtlessly put aside these questions; for, be it known unto all, that no one can belong to the temple of the Lord unless Christ be, in some measure, thus glorified in him.

But, *secondly*, Christ bears the glory *as Ruler in the temple*.

It is to his glory in this respect that the text more especially refers; for you find it followed up by the emphatic statement, "He shall sit and rule upon his throne." He is head over all things; his sway extends over heaven, and earth, and hell. But there is a very obvious and important distinction between his government of the universe and his headship over the Church, and this distinction is clearly recognised in the sacred oracles. When our Lord said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth," he distinctly taught that the government of the universe was committed to his hands. When an Apostle says of him, "He is the head of the body, the Church," he distinctly teaches that the Church is the subject of a special or peculiar administration, which is not to be confounded with Christ's universal sovereignty. The Church is a society of a special nature, requiring special laws and institutions for its government and guidance. It is a kingdom not of this world, though in this world; and hence it is placed under regulations, and invested with privileges peculiar to itself. These regulations and privileges are not of human institution; they flow from the authority

and grace of the Church's Head. Every thing connected with it is under his control, and at his disposal. The truth by which it is enlightened and sanctified has been revealed by him. The discipline by which it must be regulated is of his appointment. The ordinances by which it is edified bear the stamp of his authority. Its ministers, if really entitled to the name, derive from him the commission which they hold. In a word, he rules in his own house; his authority over it is supreme.

The glory which Christ thus bears as Ruler in the temple is represented in Scripture as the fruit of his sufferings. This honour was secured to him in the Covenant of Redemption, as the stipulated reward of his obedience unto death—"He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Thus, in the very act of laying the foundation of the temple, he earned his mediatorial right to rule in it, and thus also he earned that universal dominion which as Mediator he possesses. He who died upon the cross now sits and rules upon his throne, as "Head over all things to the Church." How glorious the majesty of his kingdom, and the exercise of his royal power! He stretches over his people a golden sceptre of righteousness and love. He sends forth his angels as "ministering spirits to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." With the rod of his strength he controls the hosts of hell, and sets a bound to their malignity which it cannot overpass. He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he restrains—nay, he maintains the very fabric of the world for the sake of the Church which he ransomed with his blood; and when the work which the text ascribes to him shall have reached its consummation, "the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up." The scaffolding shall be taken down when the building is completed.

This subject is fruitful in practical applications, but it is only to two of them that I would call your attention very briefly in conclusion. The one relates to the *duty of individuals*, the other to the *duty of churches*, or particular societies of professing Christians.

What, then, is the duty of every hearer of the gospel? It is to yield submission to Christ's royal authority. He that refuses this submission, does not consent that Christ should bear the glory as King of Zion. He serves another master; and what are the wages of his service? Nothing but death—the second death. "Kiss ye the son, then, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, if once his wrath be kindled but a little." Give ear to him, while he addresses you at once in the language of authority and love. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of

me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Remember that towards the King of Glory you cannot occupy a position of neutrality. There is but one alternative—allegiance or rebellion; and certain it is, that those who reject Christ as their King, cannot have him for their Saviour. A day is drawing on when those that have refused to submit to his authority shall be overwhelmed with anguish and with sore amazement, as they behold him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to render vengeance to his adversaries. On that awful day, how happy those who shall recognise in him the King whose authority they owned! Their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; and they shall stand encompassed with the safeguards of Omnipotence, when the flood of judgment rolls forth in its might upon the tribes of the ungodly.

What, again, does this subject suggest as to the duty of a Church, or of any particular society of professing Christians? Is it not a Church's duty to have respect in all things to Christ's authority—to regulate its procedure by the principles and the precepts of his holy Word? What is binding on every individual Christian, is also binding on every society of Christians, or of men professing to sustain that character. Do they call themselves the Temple of the Lord, and will they not recognise in all things the supreme authority of him who is Ruler in the temple? What more obvious than that the affairs of his house are to be regulated by his own laws, not by the injunctions of an earthly statute-book? And yet, because we held and were resolved to act upon this principle—a principle handed down to us from our fathers and written as with a sun-beam on the page of Revelation—we were laid under the necessity of quitting the tabernacle in which for years we had worshipped our fathers' God—in which many of you first sat down at a Communion Table, and around which are reposing the ashes of those who will not cease to be dear to you while memory holds her seat. We could not have remained without virtually admitting that secular power has a right to rule in the temple of the Lord—to regulate the formation of the sacred tie that binds the pastor to his flock—to suspend or to confer, according to its pleasure, the functions of the ministry—to open or to shut the door of access to the Table of Communion. We had, therefore, no alternative but to come out and be separate; for we could not have complied with the demands of Cæsar, without setting aside the authority of Christ. Have we any reason to regret the step which we were compelled by stern necessity to take? Nay, rather have we not ample cause to bless the name of him who has mercifully led us by a way that we knew not, and to say with the pious Jews, when leaving the land of their captivity "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad?"

Let me counsel you, my brethren, to cherish the sacred and precious principles on which our Church is based. They are not new. They were held by our fathers. They are the old principles of the Church of Scotland. They were dear to the hearts of the venerated Reformers and Martyrs of our land. Nor were they new in the days of these men of God. In truth, they are coeval with the New Testament itself; for we find them there. Earthly legislators may disown them, but they can never be expunged from the statute-book of Him who builds the temple of the Lord, and who bears the glory. Guard them, then, as a sacred and a most precious deposit, and let no worldly expediency, no selfish interest, ever induce you to abandon them.

Let me further call upon you to give thanks to God for the many tokens of his goodness which he has already conferred upon our Church, and more especially for the goodness which we have ourselves experienced. With us, indeed, he has dealt very bountifully; while thousands of our brethren, in many districts of the land, have been compelled to worship under the open canopy of heaven, and are still unsheltered from the wintry storm, we have been permitted, during the eventful months which have recently elapsed, to assemble ourselves together in much outward comfort, and without the slightest abatement of the religious privileges which we had been accustomed to enjoy. And now there is freely thrown open to us this house of prayer,\* to which we may resort without any reproach of conscience, in order to worship the God in whom our fathers trusted. Deep, indeed, must be the insensibility of our hearts, if they are not filled this day with lively gratitude to the Giver of all good. O let not the sacrifice of praise be wanting! Let our souls bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits.

Finally, beloved brethren, let me urge on you the duty of earnest, habitual, importunate supplication. Plead that this house of prayer may be honoured with the presence of the great Master of assemblies, and signalized as the birth-place of many precious souls. Plead that you may be enabled, as often as you enter it, to leave all vain thoughts and distracting cares behind you, to receive with meekness the testimony of Jesus, and to offer up in his name those spiritual sacrifices which are well-pleasing to the Father. Let your prayers ascend for one another, that there may reign among you that harmony and love which it should ever be the concern of fellow-worshippers to cherish. Let your prayers ascend for me, that I may have grace to feed you with wisdom and knowledge, and to declare without fear, and yet with all tenderness, the whole counsel of God for your salvation.

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\* The church, along with an excellent school-room, was erected at the sole charge of John and Robert Young, Esquires, members of the congregation.



The Lord grant that this may be to every one of us "the house of God," and the very "gate of heaven." May he satisfy us with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple; and cause us to experience, from Sabbath to Sabbath, within these walls, the truth and preciousness of his word of promise, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

## SERMON IX.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD NOT STRAITENED.

BY THE REV. A. L. R. FOOTE,  
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"O thou that art named The house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"—  
MICAH II. 7.

CONSIDERABLE obscurity hangs over this passage in reference to its original application : yet the general application is quite obvious. In it we are to consider God as expostulating with his Church, when in a low and languishing state, as to the cause of this. He is vindicating himself from all share of blame in the matter—he is showing them where the blame lies, even with his professing people themselves, *in their want of faith and prayer*. It is their unbelief that mars all. This is the radical evil. This keeps them away from the free and full provision of spiritual blessings contained in the New Covenant, and urged upon their acceptance. This straitens, shuts up, *imprisons* their spirits, so that their desires do not flow forth with any enlargement after Divine communications. It is not the Spirit of the Lord that is straitened, as they, on a hasty consideration, may conclude, for men are ever ready to find excuses for their sin, even at the expense of the Divine character. There is a straitening, *but it is all on their part* ; and they must be brought to feel this, both that they may acknowledge *their sin* in not having adequately valued the Spirit, and *his justice* in not having visited them with so large a share of his influence, and that they may be stirred up to the exercise of that faith and that prayer in answer to which alone we have any title to look for the fulfilment of any of the promises.

I In farther illustration of this subject we would remark, in the first place, that the question in the text, "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" implies, *that he is not straitened in the sense which our unbelief would suggest*.

No. 9.—SER. 9.

1. The Spirit is not straitened in respect of *his own inherent sufficiency*. All grace, wisdom, might, and faithfulness are in him. He is an Infinite Spirit. He cannot therefore be straitened, limited, confined, as the creature is. The creature—every creature, however high and noble—is finite, that is, has bounds set to it. The creature is limited, in respect of the *space* he occupies; but the Spirit is omnipresent. We cannot go where he is not—"Whither," says the Psalmist, "shall I go from thy spirit." The creature is limited in respect of *duration*. All things had a beginning, but the Spirit had none. He is eternal, that is, from everlasting to everlasting. Says Paul to the Hebrews, "Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." The creature is limited in respect of *knowledge*; but the "Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The creature is limited in respect of *power*; not so the Spirit. The work of creation is attributed to him; and he who made all things must needs be omnipotent. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." "By his Spirit he garnished the heavens." "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." The creature is limited in respect of *moral excellence*; but the Spirit is distinctively and supereminently the "Spirit of holiness,"—having all holiness in himself, and being the author of all holiness in those beings who are in any degree characterised by it.

2. The Spirit is not straitened in respect of *the Saviour's purchase of him for the Church*. As the Head of his Church, Christ is its source of spiritual influence. In him, for the use of his Church, the Spirit dwells in immeasurable degree. For the "Father giveth not the Spirit by measure unto his Son." It has thus pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell; and the conclusion is clear—Out of his fulness may we all receive, even grace upon grace. Oh, it was no scanty supply of the Spirit Christ ensured for his Church. There is no risk of soon draining this fountain dry. Believe it, it is inexhaustible. Hither may you repair, and drink of the water of life as long as your finite capacities will admit of, and yet leave it undiminished. Mark well, for it is important, the encouragement afforded us by the death of Christ to expect free and full communications of the Holy Spirit. Had Christ not died, the Spirit could in no degree—not even in the smallest—have been sent forth to enlighten, and sanctify, and save; for the justice of God, unpropitiated and unappeased, would have stood immovably in the way of this. But now Christ having died, and justice being satisfied, and every obstacle on God's part removed, what hinders that the Spirit be now shed forth through Christ, and that not grudgingly and sparingly, but cheerfully and abundantly? It is now not merely

consistent with the Divine character that the Spirit may be obtained. The glory of the Divine character requires that what Christ died for be accomplished—that what he purchased be bestowed. To imagine that Christ has obtained by his death only a small measure of spiritual influence for the Church; is virtually to detract from the merit and efficacy of his death. To go to God with doubting, confused, straitened desires for the Spirit, is virtually to deny that the Spirit is the purchase of Christ for his Church, and to insinuate that something yet remains to be done to entitle us to receive him, at least so fully as we need.

3. The Spirit is not straitened in respect of the offer of him in the gospel. (1.) He is offered *universally*. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." John vii. 37, 38, 39. There is not an individual, however far gone he may be in sin—however long he may have resisted, vexed, and grieved the Spirit—to whom he is not offered, on whose acceptance he is not pressed in all earnestness and sincerity, who is not as welcome to this gift of God as he is to the common gifts of his bounty, of which he is daily availing himself, if he will only receive him. Prov. i. 20--23. Let no one then say, I need entertain no hope of receiving the Spirit, for the offer of him is no longer addressed to me, I having sinned beyond the reach of its application. Do you not perceive that even scorners—they who are justly considered as having reached the highest point of impiety—are included in this gracious invitation and promise—"Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour my Spirit upon you." (2.) The Spirit is offered *freely*. Hear his own voice. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17. No high price—no price at all—is set upon him. The only question is, Will you take him? He is offered as the dearly-won purchase of the Saviour's death; and you have only to ask him as a child asks bread of his parent. You have only to pray for him, and he will be given you. You have only, in a word, to believe the promise—the free, faithful promise—and it will be fulfilled in your experience. Acts ii. 38, 39. (3.) The Spirit is offered *largely*. Point out, if you can, a single passage of Scripture where the believer is limited, is stinted, in his application to a throne of grace. You cannot do it. On the con-

trary, the authority, the warrant given him, is unlimited. "If ye ask *any thing* in my name, I will do it." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask *what ye will*, and it shall be done unto you." And when the Spirit is spoken of as being given, it is in such language as leads us to expect much; for it is a principle in the Divine administration never departed from, that it shall be unto us according to our faith—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." God promises, you observe, to pour forth the Spirit upon his Church like a flowing fertilizing stream—like a mighty rolling flood. He is promised, not in drops, "few and far between," but in showers of abundance. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." You see, then, that the risk is not of our exceeding, of our going too far, in our requests and in our expectations, but of our falling far short of what Scripture warrants, and indeed requires of us.

II. The second remark we would make upon the text is, that the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" implies that *he is often straitened or diminished in respect of his actual communications to the Church.*

Though the Spirit is not and cannot be straitened or diminished in respect of what he is in himself—though the supply of spiritual influence in Christ, our living and life-giving head, is always the same—though the language of Scripture never ceases to hold out the same encouragement at all times to come and partake abundantly of it—still it is matter of fact that the presence and power of the Spirit are not enjoyed by the Church at some periods so much as at others. How this is to be explained, we shall show by and bye. In the meantime, let us dwell a little upon the fact. We say it is a *fact*—it is a matter of observation. We have only to examine the history of the Church to discover a fact that stands out most prominently, namely, that it has not always been characterized by the same degree of vital spiritual religion. And let us attend to some of the characteristics of a Church from which the Spirit has withdrawn much of his presence and power.

1. In such a church the truth will not generally be preached with evangelical purity, faithfulness, unction, and power. In the pulpit, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which, in the experience of all true Christians, contain the life-blood of the gospel, will be denied, or darkened, and kept out of view, and in their room will be taught a cold, heartless system of moral duties and of natural religion, which has no power to benefit or to interest either those who preach it or those who hear it.

2. In such a church there will be a general departure from the simple

and Scriptural principles of government and discipline on which it is founded, and for which, in earlier and better days, many of its ministers and people contended even to the death.

3. In such a church there will be a sad lack of zeal in propagating religion and extending the means of grace, so as either to meet the growing necessities of those at home, or to convert and christianize the poor heathen abroad. The missionary spirit—the true test of piety among a people—the true test of Christian faith, and love, and zeal—will be all but extinct.

4. In such a church there will be few conversions. The vast mass of the people will live—some of them in mere formality, others of them in open and gross iniquity.

5. In such a church even the people of God themselves will not be possessed of so high a tone of spirituality as they ought to be. “For when iniquity aboundeth, the love of many waxeth cold.”

In such a Church, in short, there will be little personal piety and family prayer, but, on the contrary, much worldliness, much ungodliness, much hostility to anything like zealous Christianity. Such will be the condition of a church from which the Spirit has withdrawn much of his presence and power. In the same proportion as he departs, will spirituality decay, and carnality increase. How can it be otherwise? where the cause is not, how can we look for the effect? We know that when the sun leaves our part of the globe, cold and darkness succeed; and we conclude that the sun is set when we no longer see and feel his enlightening and warming rays;—it is even thus with the Spirit, the life and light of the Church. And what should we learn from this, but our entire dependence upon this blessed agent? Never let us forget that he is the author of all religion, of all spiritual life in the soul. Never let us forget, that a church can be no true Church of Christ without him. In all our attempts to revive and reform a church, let us feel our dependence upon him. It is possible to conceive a church perfectly scriptural, rigidly and minutely apostolical in its whole frame-work, and yet something more than even this necessary to ensure its purity, and efficiency as an instrument in advancing the cause of Christ, and the salvation of men's souls. There must be the breath of the Divine Spirit in the frame-work. The machinery may be good in itself, but what of that if it is not set in motion and kept in motion by a higher hand. The Spirit of the Lord must dwell in it, and put life into it, and give it effect, else it will be, as to all the purposes for which a church is designed, a dead, inert mass. From all this, we repeat, let us learn our dependence—our entire dependence—upon the Holy Spirit. We see that he departs more or less from churches at different periods, and then

they fall into sad decays. A downward progress commences, which all human efforts are unable to arrest. All the barriers which were placed in defence of the truth are then utterly disregarded. The flood of error and irreligion sweeps over them. Any little life remaining among them is altogether owing to their not being as yet abandoned,—utterly abandoned by the Spirit of the Lord. And this remaining leaven is a reasonable proof that they will be revived when God's set time to visit them is come. The little leaven not only keeps them from universal corruption, but will yet leaven the whole lump. "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

III. Another remark we would make upon the text is, that the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" is intended to convey a rebuke to the Church for its not having sufficiently valued, and therefore asked and received the Holy Spirit.

The question is evidently designed to intimate to us, that the reason why the Spirit of the Lord is so much withheld from us, is to be traced entirely to ourselves. If the Spirit is restrained in his actual communications, this must be either because he is unwilling to bestow his influences upon us, or because we are unwilling to accept of them. That the former is not the case we have already seen. We have shown that in this sense the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. There is no want of willingness or ability on his part. The latter, therefore, must be the case, for there is no other alternative in the argument,—there is no other way of accounting for the fact of the Spirit being in any degree restrained in his actual communications. We know that in one sense this is to be resolved into the Divine Sovereignty. We acknowledge that the Spirit of God is a "free Spirit;" and that as the "wind bloweth where it listeth," the Spirit breathes upon, and where and how he pleases. But secret things belong to God, those which are revealed belong to us and to our children. We are here speaking not of the secret purposes, but the revealed will of God, and of our duty and our privilege in regard to it. But farther; in proof that the hindrance is all on our part—in proof that our unwillingness is the sole cause of our being denied this heavenly gift, this incomparable blessing, we would proceed to appeal to the tribunal of conscience. Let us try ourselves upon this point. Is it not true that we are all naturally very self-sufficient—that we fancy that we have ample resources in ourselves for attaining true happiness, and that we are able for every duty to which we may be called? And is it not true, that, being thus self-sufficient, we

have no inclination, but, on the contrary, a very great disinclination, to be entirely indebted to another ?

Let me apply these general remarks more particularly to the two great classes of the unconverted and the converted. 1. There are some who are entirely destitute of any work of the Spirit of God upon their hearts. They have never yet received the Spirit. Dare they say that they have long been willing to receive him, but have found it impossible ? Their consciences would not suffer them to say so. They must feel that they do injustice to this Divine Being. They cannot say that he has not been offered to them—they cannot say that they have not every encouragement to ask him—they cannot say that they *have* asked him and been refused—they cannot lay their hand on their heart and say this. They know, though they may not choose to admit as much to others, that they never once in good earnest and sincerity put up a petition that he would descend upon their souls. And how can they wonder that they have not received him ? Still more, how can they presume to charge upon God a hindrance which exists only in themselves ? Their hearts are opposed to the Spirit, being proud, impure, obstinate : this is their guilt now, and this will prove their condemnation at last. They act sinfully in rejecting the Spirit, because they act voluntarily. Their rejection of him arises from the state of their hearts, and is therefore sinful ; and it is our design in all this to convince them of sin—to fasten a charge of guilt upon their consciences.

2. As for those who have in some measure received the Spirit ; they often complain of the low state of religion in their own hearts, and in the world around them. As they contemplate the present condition of the Church, and contrast it with what they have been led to believe was the condition of it in former times, and with what Scripture warrants them in believing it will one day be, they are led to exclaim, “Our leanness, our leanness !” and in despondency and unbelief they ask, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened ?” Hard thoughts of God suggest themselves to them, as if he had become careless of the interests of his Church, and had, in unkindness and in unfaithfulness, withdrawn his Spirit from it ! But let them beware of this ; let them bethink themselves for a moment, and they will find reason to exonerate God of all blame, and to place it to their own account. “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not straitened, that it cannot save.” The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, as they imagine. Oh, no ! Why then, it may be asked, do we experience so little of his reviving and rejoicing presence ? We will endeavour to satisfy them on this point. We appeal, too, to their consciences ; we draw an answer from their experience. Have they cherished as they ought to have done the visits of this Divine Person to



*their own souls?* or is it not true that they have grieved and quenched him by indulging in those desires and in those actions which are contrary to his character and to his work as the Sanctifier of his people? Have they prayed with all the intensity and perseverance of which their souls were capable, that the Spirit of the Lord might be shed forth upon *themselves*, and not upon themselves only, but upon the whole Church, and upon the whole world; yea, upon all flesh, according to the extensive, all-comprehending promise? Joel ii. 28, 29. Or is it not true, that they have, in a great measure, ceased to realise their dependence upon him, and that their desires after him have become proportionally faint and few; and that thus, religion decaying in their own hearts, they became less concerned about the progress of religion in the hearts of others? If all this be true, and without doubt it is true, how can they complain that the Spirit of the Lord is straitened? How can they complain that there is little of life and peace in their own souls, and that the cause of Christ is making so slow progress in the world? Do not their own consciences charge them with great neglect and great sin in this matter? Are they not compelled to own that their unbelief is the cause of it all? Do they not perceive that by their deficiency in faith and prayer they have been standing in the way of the more plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost, and of that immediate and general revival of religion of which they admit we so much stand in need? We know not if these remarks will be interesting, or even intelligible, to all; yet sure we are, there is no real Christian who will not acknowledge that he is justly chargeable with coming far short of the duty he owes to the Church and the world, of using all his influence at a throne of grace that the Spirit may be poured out upon us from on High.

IV. The fourth and last remark we would make upon the text is, that the question, "is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" is intended to convey an encouragement to us, to ask him—and to ask him confidently and largely. The encouragement is twofold—drawn, first, from the form of the question itself; and, secondly, from its address.

1. The question, as we have seen, is evidently designed to teach us that the Spirit of the Lord *is not straitened*—that is, is not limited or confined in the sense our unbelief suggests; and, consequently, it is also designed to teach us that we ought not to be straitened in our applications for him. It is as if it were said—Set no bounds to your desires, that which you ask is free, rich, abundant, yea infinite; therefore, ask in faith nothing doubting—ask more and more—ask again and again. Do not fear that you will offend God by too great urgency—by too high demands. Such a thing has never yet happened, and never will or can

happen. God never yet said of any supplicant at his mercy seat, you have asked too much of my Spirit, I cannot afford to be drawn upon to such extent; there is a given, a definite limit you must in future take care not to transgress. O had we to deal with God on such terms, who does not see that all our ardour and all our confidence would be checked, and that we would apply to him, if we applied at all, in fear and distrust. But God proposes to transact with us in the most liberal terms. His only controversy with any of his people is, that they do not meet his offers in the same frankness with which they are made. He is grieved to find them so suspicious, especially after the many proofs he has given them of his willingness to impart to them whatever they need. O then let us take God at his word. Let us believe that he is as beneficent as he says he is. Let us not transfer to him who is infinite, the selfishness of our own hearts, and the narrowness of our own resources. "God's ways are not as our ways." Here lies our error; we judge of God as we would of a creature; we think him altogether such a one as ourselves; we look into our own hearts, and we find there no such disinterested benevolence, no such unchanging faithfulness; we find there nothing but selfishness and deceit, and we cannot give another—we cannot give even God—credit for being better than ourselves; and hence we see the sin and guilt of unbelief! Unbelief brings down the all-perfect God to the level and standard of the creature—unbelief invests the Infinite with all the littleness of the finite—unbelief limits the Holy One of Israel—unbelief makes God a liar, for it will not trust his promises. O then let us beware of unbelief, and seek to "be strong in faith, that we may give glory to God!"

2. Notice, next, to whom this question is addressed, and you will find additional encouragement from this consideration—"O thou that art named the house of Israel." It is addressed to the professing Church and people of God; and, as addressed to them, it is designed to put them in mind of the relation God bears to them as their God, and the warrant thereby afforded them to ask and expect the Holy Spirit. To the Church belong all the promises of spiritual influence from on high. The Spirit is the purchase and gift of the Son to his Church, and from that Church, therefore, he will never, never depart. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Isaiah lix. 21. The words of Malachi in reference to this point are very remarkable: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." Does it not, then, tend

mightily to strengthen the faith of God's people, and to encourage their expectations, even in the lowest and least promising condition of the Church, to bethink them of that sure and well-ordered covenant, whereby the continued presence and agency of the Spirit are insured in it? Often may they be led to fear lest the Spirit, grieved and resisted, should for ever have taken his departure, never again to return to revive and bless his languishing and drooping Church. But this is their stay—this their comfort—this the foundation for their faith and hope, even the everlasting Covenant. If they lose sight of this, the prospects of the Church will often seem dark enough; but so long as they keep sight of it, their hearts will be filled with joy and confidence. It tends greatly, too, to strengthen the faith of the people of God, in reference to the revival of religion in the Church through the enlarged communication of spiritual influence, to look back and consider how the Church has been recovered from a low and apparently expiring state on many former occasions. Often before did it seem as if the Spirit of the Lord was about to forsake his Church altogether, when, lo! he, mindful of his covenant, returned and shed forth his benign influences, and then forthwith, to use the beautiful imagery of the Song, "The winter of his Church was past, the rain was over and gone; the flowers appeared on the earth; the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land; the fig-tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell." All was again life and beauty, and fruitfulness, and spiritual prosperity. It was thus in the past history of the Church, and so we may surely conclude it will be again. It tends, further, greatly to strengthen the faith of the people of God in reference to a revival of religion, through an enlarged communication of spiritual influence, to mark any symptoms, however few and faint they may be, of the approach of so delightful a consummation. When they perceive an unusual shaking among the moral mass—when they perceive a greater degree of interest excited about religion—when they perceive more prayer, and more zeal, and more activity—when they perceive extensive and manifest conversion work taking place—and, finally, when they perceive Satan more than usually busy in disseminating error and impiety of all kinds, and more than usually violent in ridiculing, and opposing, and oppressing good men, whose only crime is too high a standard of piety, and too great zeal for the extension, and purity, and efficiency of the Church—when they perceive all this, well may they conclude that a great and good work is going on, and that the prince of darkness, the god of this world, is beginning to tremble for his throne. All this, we say, is a proof that the Spirit of God is beginning to bless the Church with more of his presence and power, and should

just the more encourage us to pray and hope for his continued and enlarged outpouring. O should not prayer be redoubled—should it not be increased tenfold in the Church at the present moment? There never was such need for prayer: there never was such encouragement for prayer. Thank God there *is* more prayer in the Church than there used to be. Yet there is by no means enough. Let prayer be increased among *ministers*. “O prayer!” exclaims the admirable Leighton, “the converse of the soul with God—the breath of God in man returning to its original—frequent, and fervent prayer—the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual; as that holy company tell us, when appointing deacons to serve the tables, they add, ‘But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word.’” Yes, it *is* prayer that makes the rest of our work “lively and effectual.” The minister who neglects “frequent and fervent prayer”—who does not engage in his work in a prayerful spirit, beginning it with prayer, carrying it on with prayer, concluding it with prayer—cannot expect the seal of the Spirit’s approbation to rest upon it. How can he? He is not honouring the Spirit, and the Spirit will not honour him. A prayerless ministry must needs be, to a very great extent at least, a fruitless ministry. The Spirit, indeed, is not to be limited in the use of instruments any more than in any other matter, and he may—there is reason to believe he does—sometimes employ those who have never been brought under the influence of the truth themselves, to lead others to the saving knowledge of it. But unquestionably the most successful ministers have always been the most prayerful and spiritual ministers. Here it is that so many of us fail. Let us never forget that no amount of labour in public or private—that no faithfulness and ability in preaching, and no diligence and care in visiting and catechising—will make up for the want of prayer. Precisely in proportion as we do all this in prayer and faith, will we succeed in converting sinners, and edifying saints. But we work too much in our own strength, and in righteous retribution we are left to our own strength, which, in this cause, is very weakness. We long to see a revival of religion among our flocks, and we have recourse to all those expedients which an enlightened zeal can suggest for producing it. Still no revival appears. If an impression seems on the eve of being made, we are doomed to a sad disappointment of all our expectations. Who does not see that there must be some deficiency in our ministrations? There *must* be a want; and what *can* that want be, but the *want of sufficiently earnest and believing prayer*. Immediately, then, let this want be supplied. Let our ministrations be more prayerful—let them be more simple, more dependent, more childlike, if I may so speak,—and then let us see what the result

will be. O believe it, the result will be glorious. And let prayer be increased among the *people* as well as among ministers. Not only ought *ministers* to conduct all their ministrations in a prayerful spirit, but the people ought to be taught to wait upon them in the same spirit. Who has not reason to complain of the paucity of praying persons among us? Is it proposed increasing the number of our elders or Sabbath-school teachers?—this is the great hindrance in our way. It is humiliating to think of it. The spirit of prayer would seem all but extinct, and we *must* make an effort to resuscitate it. We state it as our deliberate conviction that the spirit of prayer has been too much discouraged and repressed by the coldness and suspicion which have been manifested by some ministers towards meetings for social prayer, where the gift of prayer can be cultivated. If we would awaken the dormant piety and devotion of our people, *this* is not the least important part of the instrumentality to be employed. That there is a close connection between meetings for social prayer and a revival of religion, can be established by an appeal to fact. No sooner is a parish thoroughly awakened, than they arise as one of the natural and necessary fruits of such an awakening. They indicate its progress and contribute to its increase and stability. No need for a minister *then* to urge upon his people such a duty. They spring up unknown to him; and where is the minister who has really at heart the cause of Christ—of that Master whom he serves—who does not rejoice at them, and offer them all due direction and encouragement? This clearly proves that there is a foundation for social prayer in man's regenerated nature. It proves that wherever the life of religion is imparted to the soul, it will, if left to its native tendency, put itself forth—it will seek vent for its exercise in this particular way; and that, where it does not thus put itself forth, it is because violence has been done to it—because from a groundless fear of abuse, it has been altogether, or in a great measure, checked. Had it been allowed to be put forth in this way, how much more progress would the individual himself have made in the Divine life—for all our graces, and especially the grace of prayer, improve by exercise—and how much more good would he have done to the Church and the world! It is well known what a mighty engine for good or evil in society is the social principle. Shall this principle be discarded in religion—in *religion*, which will at once afford a noble field for its exercise, and guide it aright. The Church has need of all the benefit arising from the *social principle sanctified*, just because it has need of the combined energies of all its members in the maintenance and advancement of the great cause in which it is engaged. AMEN.

## SERMON X.

COMING UNTO JESUS.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER, MONIFIETH.

"Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.

THIS is one of the most precious texts in the Bible. I do not speak thus, as if there were any part of that blessed book which might be regarded as of little value. It is all "more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold." This the believer at least can testify, as the Holy Spirit testifies. His comprehensive language is that of the Psalmist, "I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning *all* things to be right," and therefore "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." In his eyes, and in his experience, even the most alarming denunciations of the inspired record are exceeding precious; aye, more precious far than the most sweetly distilling accents of mercy to many a heedless ear, for "the full soul loatheth an honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every-thing bitter is sweet." But still the single short sentence before us, contains so much of the rich marrow and essence of redeeming love, that it seems to hold within it the concentrated savour and preciousness of the whole gospel of grace. Take every other verse of all the Scriptures away, and leave but only this, still is there revealed by it a foundation sufficient whereon a world of souls may build their hopes and never be put to shame. Only let the trembling soul rest firmly on this living rock, the floods may deluge and the storms may beat, earth may scorn and hell may rage, but it cannot perish.

Precious in itself; how much more precious still when standing in connexion with other sure words of truth! Join these two texts together, and you will see what I mean: "Salvation is far from the wicked;" "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." As thy soul liveth, the first dread word is true; how awfully alarming! But as the Lord liveth, the second glad sound is equally true; how glorious is the news! It is the Lord of glory himself that speaks it.

No. 10.—SER. 10.

Would that all would hearken, for he cries to all, "Unto you O men do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men."—*Impenitent sinners*, hear! Whether ye will hear or whether ye will forbear, ye are "nigh unto cursing," nay, ye are all already under the curse of an insulted God. This is what the Lord of truth says of *you*, and will ye not tremble? But the same Lord in my text says *unto you*, come and I will receive you; will ye melt?—*Alarmed souls*, hear! Are you like the troubled sea that cannot rest? would you give all the world for a door of acceptance and peace with God? You are just seeking for what the text unfolds. You wish to learn, and here from the Saviour's own mouth you do learn, that, coming to him, you shall not be cast out.—*Desponding believers*, listen! Are you full of doubts, and darkness, and perplexity, seeking for an experience of acceptance, and mourning because you have not attained it? O is not Christ's word fully as trustworthy as your own experience? Cling to that word, as the text declares it, and your experience of its truth must of necessity follow.—*Rejoicing saints*, attend! Have you "peace in believing?" are you "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?" And how know ye that ye are not deceiving yourselves with a vain fond fancy? Is it not because the reason of the hope that is in you has its sum and substance in the text? Does not your glad heart ever turn to it and say, I believe what my Saviour spake—yea spake to me, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."

Now in these words we have, *first*, a person pointed out; *second*, an assurance given to him. Let us endeavour, as plainly as possible, to open up the Saviour's words, by illustrating these two points in their order.

I. *The person pointed out.* The Redeemer describes him shortly as "him that cometh to me."

This at once raises the question, what is meant by *coming to Christ*? The expression is simple, and surely it describes a very simple matter, when even babes and sucklings exemplify it, according to that tender entreaty, "Suffer *little children* to come unto me, and forbid them not." Yet, simple though it be, the carnal heart most grievously mistakes its real import; for it is one of those things of the Spirit of God which the natural man understandeth not, neither can he know it, because it is spiritually discerned. O that the Lord himself would *shew* it unto us, and constrain us to *do* it, while I endeavour simply to illustrate

1. *What it is not*; for a fearfully common and fatal mistake upon this vital matter is, that men put the shadow for the substance, the appearance for the reality, the name of the thing for the thing itself. For instance, a sinner may be so far convinced of the necessity and of the

propriety of coming to Christ, as to bethink himself of setting about it. I will arise and go, says he, but where am I to find him? And the first ready answer that meets him is,—in the Bible. The poor sinner, therefore, thinks that he has nothing more to do than to “search the Scriptures.” He learns that Christ is to be met with in his Word; and, therefore, he begins to be somewhat careful and diligent in observing the precept, “give attendance to reading.” And thus, alas! he satisfies himself that all is well. But O! surely there is a fatal error here. The Scriptures are not Christ, they are only “they which *testify* of him;” and hence coming to *them* cannot be the same thing as coming to *him*. They point out the Saviour; but going to the finger-post is a very different thing from going to where it points. On every page of the Bible is this inscription, “look to Jesus;” but many look at that inscription, and read it every day, sadly deceiving themselves that, by looking at it, they are looking at *him* of whom it speaks. That striking passage, John v. 39, 40, has been, and very properly may be translated, “ye *do* search the Scriptures, &c., but ye *will not come* to me that ye might have life.” Just as if the Saviour had said, “ye *do* come to my book; but ye *will not come* to *myself*.” An awful word to Bible readers that rest contented with their Bible-reading. How many do thus read the Bible to their condemnation! Dear brethren, is it thus with you?

In the same way, since it is most true that the Lord dwelleth in his holy temple, and is assuredly to be found therein, many vainly flatter themselves that by coming to the house of God they really come to Christ. And yet is it not contrary to common sense to say, or to suppose, that the house and he that dwells within it are one and the same? Believe me, it is not enough to draw near to the sanctuary; we must draw near to the Lord *in* the sanctuary. True it is that attendance on the ministrations of the Gospel is a graciously appointed means, which God's blessing maketh instrumental in bringing sinners to Jesus. But it is nothing more than a *means* to an end; it is not the *end* itself. The cry of the Gospel is—Come to the *means* of grace, in order that you may be persuaded thereby to come to the *fountain* of grace—come to his *house*, that his voice of love there heard may stir you up to come to *himself*—come *thus far*, that you may learn the necessity, the duty, the privilege of coming *much farther*. With thousands of them that are “heavy laden,” frequenting his courts is all the compliance yielded to the Saviour's call, “Come unto me.” Are you among that number? Think of these solemn texts—“When ye *come* to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts?” “They *come* unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.” “This people



draw *near me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart *far from me*." I believe many come to Christ's ordinances, in order to quiet their consciences for not coming to Christ himself.

But some perhaps may think—If I come to the Throne of Grace with praise and prayer, that is surely coming to Christ. Ah, mistake not, dear brethren. Prayer itself is nothing more than an ordinance. The Throne of Grace is not grace; much less is it the fountain of grace. Put none of the Saviour's institutions, however blissful they may be, in the place of the Saviour himself. Prayer is a sweet well of salvation; but it is not salvation—it is not the Saviour. You may come to it, and find it a "fountain sealed," unless you meet Jesus there to open it unto you. Or you may daily cast your pitcher in, and grow old in drawing nothing up, if, in the exercise, you keep at a distance from Christ himself, who alone can fill it; for he cries, "If any man thirst, let him *come unto me* and drink." Once and for all let me assure you, that it is one thing to cry unto Christ *from afar*, and it is quite another thing to touch the hem of his garment, having *drawn near*. True it is that believers are ever coming to Christ in prayer; but then it does not follow that every prayer is a real coming unto him. Did David, for example, say in his prayers, I *have* come? Nay, but his language is, "I *will* draw nigh"—"*bring* me to thy holy hill." And so every man of real prayer just uses it as a means; and, therefore, in it he is exercised as Peter was, when on the sea he cried, "Lord *bid me come* unto thee." *Calling on* him is not necessarily *coming* to him, any more than hearing him call on us is so. As Christ calls and few come, so many call, and think no more of coming.

Nothing, I apprehend, can be more simple and obvious than all this; and yet, in spiritual things, there is nothing to which man is more prone, than practically to lose sight of this very alphabet of the matter. In order to rivet it in your minds, turn to Christ's own personal ministry. Consider the circumstances in which the text was spoken—"Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a *great company* come unto him." Verse 5. "They abode with him that day, and the day thereafter they followed him across the sea." Verses 22, 24. They had come to him in one sense, and yet he still found it needful to bid them "come." And have ye not read how, on other occasions, they gladly flocked around him—came at all times and seasons—came to see his wonders, to hear his words, to proclaim his praise, to request his interposition—came in hundreds and in thousands, and staid with him for days? And yet it was of these very men that he complained, "Ye will *not come* unto me, that ye might have life." Know ye not of one who came when he *was* called,

sojourned with him as a friend for three years, learned his precious truth, was taught by him to pray, shared in his devotions, outwardly obeyed his commands, preached his Gospel, perchance to the saving of souls? and yet this was Iscariot who betrayed him, and is gone to his own place as the son of perdition. Can it be said of that disciple that he had really come to Jesus? I trow not. And yet how many Gospel hearers are there, of whom so much cannot be said, as is true of Judas; and still they rebel against the thought that they are, in any wise, as destitute of grace as he.

But let me not be misunderstood. I am far from disparaging the means of grace, or undervaluing the diligent employment of them. 'Tis a blessed thing to search the Scriptures, to wait on ordinances, to pray. And would to God that Gospel despisers were brought to these hallowed exercises. But still I must affirm that it is awful folly to rest satisfied with coming that length and no more. Satan has no objections to bring souls thither, if he can keep them there. It is one of his old devices to bring demoniacs to the synagogue. The carnal heart is fain to quiet alike the voice of conscience and the call of Christ, with the permission to itself, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther." Yes, but that "*no farther*" is a lie; for stopping short of Christ cannot stop short of hell. But in addition to noticing what coming to Christ *is not*—let us consider

2. *What it is.* Now, remember that when Christ invites the sinner to come, he is addressing the spiritual part of his nature; it is his soul that he would have to come. True compliance with the call is, therefore, an inward thing; it is a process of the heart. The arrested and willing affections trooping forth to welcome the Saviour—the heart gushing out to Christ, and casting itself wholly and unreservedly on his bosom, crying, "Lord, I am thine, save thou me." That is true coming unto Jesus. It is the heart and soul that Christ desires to have, and entreats to come. "My son give me thine heart." Make whatever other approach to the Lord he may, so long as his heart keeps back, the sinner remains at a distance from the Saviour. He may search the Scriptures, he may worship, he may pray, he may spend a lifetime in nothing else, yet if the heart be wandering far away the while, the character set forth in my text is none of his.

It is obvious, therefore, that coming to Jesus implies a *forsaking of sin*. It is plain as day, that when a man is in one city, and goes to another, his coming to the second implies his leaving the first. He cannot remain in both, nor divide himself between the two. Now, Christ and sin are represented by these two cities. They are as much opposite to each other as east is to west; a coming *into* the one *must*

imply a coming out of the other. A heart coming to Christ, and yet remaining wedded to sin, is alike a contradiction in terms and an impossibility in fact. He that remains in Sodom can never set foot in Zear. 2 Cor. vi. 14-18 is very lucid on the subject, for the text has its counterpart in that striking call, "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you,*" or in nowise cast you out.

Remember that I am speaking of the *heart* forsaking sin; therefore, do not suppose for a moment that that implies leaving our sin's *guilt* behind us in coming to Christ. No; in that sense we must bring our sins with us. We cannot do otherwise. Think not that you must wait till you are free from sin, before coming to Jesus; for then you would wait for ever, and never come. We must come as we are, that Christ may cleanse us when we come, for this is one of the chief ends of our coming. Bring your sins with you; Christ charges you to do it; but do not leave your heart behind you with sin.

But some burdened soul may put the question—I feel I cannot forsake my attachment to sin before I come to Christ; and what am I to do? I answer—Most true, nor is it required that you should renounce your love of sin *before* you come to him. If you could, you would have but little need of a Saviour; you could be your own. But what I proclaim as the truth of God in regard to coming unto Christ is this, that while the one does not *go before* the other, the one cannot be *without* the other. They take place together; if they be not one and the same, they are inseparable as light and the sun. Let me insist upon it. He that comes to Christ must renounce sin by that very coming, else there is no truth in that Scripture, "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.*" The Lord cannot receive and bless the soul that is wedded to, and one with, that sin which grieveth his Holy Spirit; for, were it otherwise, coming unto Jesus would just be insulting his holiness, and crucifying him afresh. "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" But still let no one think that he must put away sin *first*, in order to be in an acceptable condition to come to Christ *thereafter*. "*This man receiveth sinners*" is ground sufficient, while it is the only ground, on which to look for acceptance. Your being a sinner, and thus standing in need of Christ, constitutes your fitness to come to him for it. His invitation to sinners as they are is your only and your sufficient warrant. His love for sinners as they are insures your instant welcome. Are you a sinner, loaded and burdened with guiltiness? Come as you are, when you hear him proclaiming, "*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" Delay not in the vain hope of making yourself other than you are, for if you can do so, Christ has died in vain. But think not that you can come to him, and

remain as you are; for a real coming is just a renouncing of all unrighteousness. In one word, there is loathing of sin in coming; there is pardon of guilt when we come.

Still farther, coming to Christ implies a *renouncing of self*. This follows of necessity from what has been said, for self-trusting and self-seeking are *sin*. So long as we trust in our own arm to save, we will never seek after the salvation which Christ offers; and so long as we follow out our selfish ends, we are abiding far, and wandering farther from him. What saith the Lord? "If any man will *come after me*, let him *deny himself*." As the soul goes out from the Babylon of sin, so it also goes out from the tottering tabernacle of self-sufficiency, in fleeing unto Christ as the strong tower. We cannot betake ourselves to him without seeing our own emptiness. Coming to receive all from him implies our feeling of needing all. We must come like the prodigal—yonder "is bread enough, and to spare, while I perish with hunger." It is for lack of this that many come to ordinances, as we have seen, and yet come not to Christ. In self-sufficiency they verily think that, some how or other, their reading, their worship, their prayers, are to save them; that these, their own doings, are in some manner to help them to acceptance with God. It is as if they said, "I will not be cast out because I do these things," while all the time the true and only *because* stares them in the face—because *Christ hath done all* for us. I put it to your consciences, brethren, is not this the natural reasoning of the heart? Even the conscience of the renewed man must answer, that he is often tempted of the old man to feel as if observance of duties were to win his way to Jesus, and bring down blessings from on high. And yet I put it to the commonest understanding, if this be not robbing Christ of His glory, and thinking to take His sceptre of salvation into our own hands. Coming to Christ is just a casting ourselves upon him, that *he may save*, for he alone can. It is not our reading, but finding Christ in the word read, which profits. It is not our worshipping, but the surrender of ourselves to Christ in the worship, that realizes the blessing. It is not our praying, but Christ's merits pled in the prayer, that brings down the answer. O that men remembered this, and so, coming out of themselves, would come to Jesus.

Nor is it a less obvious inference from what we have said; that coming to Christ implies "*faith which worketh by love*." Does a man, renouncing sin and emptied of self, flee to Christ, and cast himself upon him? that is just such *faith*. If he has no *love* to, nor desire after, the Redeemer, he will never come to him; but if he has, he will not, he cannot keep back. Coming to Christ is a coming of the heart—another name for *love*. *Faith* establishes a union of the soul to Jesus,—surely implying that the

parties so united have come near, mutually near. Although so obvious, it is well to insist upon it, that *real coming is believing coming*. Do you not remember that word, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is," &c.? The whole Gospel ever reiterates this, but the Saviour's own personal teaching is specially incessant upon it. For instance, John vii. 37, 38, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." As if he had said, "If you want salvation, come—you have salvation if you believe." Or again, John vi. 68, 69, Peter says, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ." The passage needs no comment. Or even more plainly still (verse 35), "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And how plainly does verse 36 expound the essence of true coming—"Ye also have seen me and believed not;" i. e., ye have seen me in your outward coming, but something is lacking in that coming, in that ye believe not. And then comes the text—"All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."

The import of the text, therefore, is just the same as these—"He that believeth shall not be ashamed;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" "Look unto me and be saved;" and such like gracious assurances. Indeed, it must be so. The Word of God is consistent with itself; it attaches not salvation to things that are different. Yet salvation is coupled with "coming," "believing," "looking"—expressions that imply the same Divine work of grace. But, remember, it is never said, "read," "worship," "pray," and ye shall be saved; but if in these appointed means there be believing, coming, looking, salvation is sure. Rom. x. 13, with first clause of 14.

Behold, then, the simple, the *very* simple, Gospel plan. Christ is not far from you; he is near, he hath come so close to your heart that he is standing at the door, and is knocking there even now. What is wanting but that you come and open the door of that heart, and he is yours? Do you say that you cannot come because you cannot change your heart? Ah, Christ's way of stating it is, "*ye will not come*." It is your will that is wanting; that is the root of your inability. But the Gospel meets you here also, for the Lord is ready to "*work in you both to will and to do*." Very simple Gospel! very wondrous grace! Let us now consider

II. *The assurance given concerning the person indicated.* It is brief but comprehensive, "him—I will in nowise cast out," and

1. Here attend to *the assurance itself*.

The first clause of the verse, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me," may move to sore misgivings the enquiring soul that hath not learned as yet to prize *the sovereignty* of grace as a theme of grateful rejoicing. As it gropes its anxious way, the stricken heart, when it comes to the passage, may be ready to fail for fear, and make this desponding comment on it—I shall come if I am given to Christ, but how can I resolve that *if*—has the Father given me to Christ? When I search the Bible, it does not tell me; and every thing in myself has a voice declaring that I am none of his. But see how every word of the text falls dropping, like heaven's balmiest dew, on a bruised reed like this. O do not tarry, distracted soul, to reason out the matter from this perplexity. Think not to pierce, with curious eye, into the secret counsels of God. You cannot, and it is well that you cannot. Rather put the matter thus—does any word of the Lord assure you that you are not given by the Father to the Son? No one. So meantime let that suffice to reinspire your hopes. And now read on, I pray you, for these are the blessed words that follow directly upon the clause which has given you this disquiet—"Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Does not your heart leap for joy at the sound? Will ye not believe it? Can you still doubt the Saviour's word, and so call God a liar?

Observe also, I beseech you, how the short description of *the persons* in the first part of the text, sheds a flood of light on the wideness of the range of *the promise* in the second. "Him that cometh," is the unrestricted expression. Whosoever and whatever he be, though he may have been the most hardened rebel for ever so long—though he may be the readiest slave of Satan still—though he may have spent his life in studied contempt of God—though most blasphemously of all the sons of men he may have joined himself with devils in fiercely cursing Jesus, and though now his palsied head nods over the very brink of the raging lake of fire,—still let him come, and he shall find a blessed welcome. The text makes no exception; for the heart of him that utters it makes none. The chiefest sinner, the veriest Manasseh in guilt, Christ's blood is all sufficient to cleanse, and the sounding of the bowels of his yearning love proclaims that he is longing to receive him.

Yea, even the grammatical construction of the text affords sweet encouragement to anxious souls. Sometimes sinners are addressed in the aggregate; as, for instance, "Come unto me *all ye* that labour and are heavy laden." At other times, in order that each soul may know itself to be individually dealt with, the invitation is addressed to that soul in particular, "Ho, every *one* that thirsteth come." "Let *him* that is athirst come." And then the promise is also given to that individual

soul, in order that it may lay hold on it, as peculiarly given to itself, "*Him* I will in nowise cast out." Can you appreciate the force of what I say, or rather can you appreciate the savour of the Redeemer's manner of speech here employed? Hungry souls can do so; for I find one of them thus discoursing of the text: "*Him* that cometh; it is in the singular number, speaking favour, not only to the body of believers in general, but to *every particular soul* that applies itself to Christ." This is no wire-drawn refinement upon words. The words do mean all this; for they are spoken by the Shepherd that leaves the ninety and nine, to go after the *one sheep* which is lost, saying, "I will take you *one* of a city," as well as "two of a family, and I will bring you to Mount Zion," for, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over *one sinner* that repenteth."

"I will in nowise," &c.; there is much to assure the soul even in the simple "*I will*." The speaker has received into his own hands all authority in the matter, and none can interfere with him. "Father, thou hast given *him power* over all flesh, that *he* should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," and we have seen that these are they that come to him; so that we find him declaring, "*I will* that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Know then, that it is with Christ alone that you have to do in this matter; and it is blessed to know this, for you need not be afraid to trust his assurance. Consider what manner of man he is. 'Tis he who wept over Jerusalem, saying, "How often *would I* have gathered thee, and ye *would not*." It is he who died praying, "Father, forgive them." It is that same Jesus who still liveth, and even now once more announces to every one of you, "Him that cometh *I will* in nowise cast out." Surely he is trustworthy. He must be in earnest in what he says, for he died to prove it, and he lives to fulfil it.

"I will in nowise cast out." *In nowise*. How strong the asseveration! No plea that can be adduced, no consideration that can be urged, can by any possibility influence Christ to refuse the returning sinner. If the sinner is rejected, it is on this one ground, that he would not come: "*Because* I have called, and ye have refused, I will laugh at your calamity." But the one single circumstance of the sinner's coming to Him is all that Christ requires, in order to take and hide him in the hollow of His hand. The strongest motives that can be conceived, as fitted to induce the Saviour to put such an one away, he, as it were, sets aside with this one answer, "He hath come to me, I will in nowise cast him out." It is the love of Christ that shines full in this reply, and it is that love which is thy sure refuge, O sinner. Is this, therefore, the great argument that you think must weigh against you with Christ, viz., that you are so utterly vile a sinner? Be it so; but remember, that

"when sin aboundeth, grace doth *much more* abound." If you will not trust, at least *hearken* to this voice, "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Come thus, as he invites you, to hear, and you will learn the strong assurance that you have to *come to him altogether*. For surely your very vileness as a sinner should, instead of making you to hesitate about the matter, constrain you instantly to fly to such a Saviour. In nowise keep back, and he will in nowise cast out. Mistrust not his love, for it is stronger than death; mistrust not his power, for it is omnipotent; mistrust not his truth, for it is pledged and unchangeable. Yea, heaven and earth may pass away, but all that word of his, of which the text is so blessed a portion, never can.

"In nowise." The expression in the original tongue, which has been translated thus, has a peculiar significancy. It is a *double* negative. It has been well rendered by a favourite commentator, "I will not; no, I will not cast out." What could the Saviour have said more? It is an assurance made doubly sure. Truly they "have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them." Dear brethren, is it not yet strong enough for you? See, then,

2. *The grounds of the assurance in the text.* Though it had rested on nothing else than the single text we speak from, that would have been ground sufficient. But how many such like sure words are there; their name is Legion. But the promise rests not on passages of Scripture alone.

The *purposes of the Father* make it sure. I quote again in proof, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." And wherefore is it that the Father giveth them to the Son? Not surely that he may reject them. but that he may justify, and sanctify, and save them. This is the Divine purpose, and it must be made good. It is Christ's office, as Mediator, to carry it out in fulfilment unto every soul that comes to him (read verses 38 and 39); and therefore he has said unto the Father, and at the latter day he will say it yet again, when the fulness of the elect shall be come in, "Of them that thou hast given me have I lost none." That must be well ordered in all things and sure, which has its foundation on Jehovah's eternal decree.

The *Death of Christ* makes it sure. For O, if he were to refuse so much as one solitary soul that comes to him, he would so be confessing that he had died in vain, or that the merits of his death were not sufficient to extend to that soul. He paid the price of his precious blood for the redemption of all that come; he cannot cast wantonly away even one lamb of the little flock—the purchase of which cost him so dear. He could not have gone the length of dying under the curse for souls, and



then consent that his anguish on the tree should miss its fruit. O no; whatever man may do, Christ holds not his death and agony in so low esteem. And yet that death is the measure of the value of a soul in his eyes; how then can he even entertain the thought of casting such a pearl away? Were he to do so, it would be to repent him of having died—to announce that now he finds himself deceived, when he thought a soul so precious as to give his life a ransom for it.

*The Resurrection of Christ* makes it sure. It is the resurrection reward of the Mediator's pain to receive souls at the Father's hand, and to give salvation to all that come to him. Having wrought the work, will he refuse the reward? Souls are the jewels in his mediatorial crown. Can he take that glorious diadem, pluck out from it the "sapphires" that the Father hath given him, and cast them away? He lives in Heaven as an interceding High Priest, an advocate for those that come to him and give him their cause to plead. Can he refuse one such, as if he were weary of his blessed avocation? O no; he saves "them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

*The Work of the Spirit* makes it sure. It is the spirit that persuades and enables the soul to come to Christ; and he that sends the Spirit on this work is Christ himself. Can he commission his Spirit to bring a soul to him to be rejected? Can he, if I may use such language, send the Holy Ghost on an idle errand? It is impossible. Can the persons of the one Godhead so counteract each others portion of the work of grace, as that the Spirit shall begin the work, by bringing a soul to Christ, and then the Son make all of none avail, by refusing to receive it? Perish for ever the thought! for "whom he called them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Yes, the Spirit sets his mark on every soul he brings to Jesus, and sprinkles it with the Saviour's blood; and no destroying angel can ever make that soul a prey.

*All God's Attributes* make it sure. "God is love;" he loveth souls, even when lying in sin, else he had never sent his Son to save them. In that love, he desires that every soul would come to Jesus. And when it comes—when in the very attitude in which he longs to see it—can he then reject it? Loving it even before it comes, can he put it away in hatred on its coming? Nay; for even his very justice insures its acceptance. While the soul is far from Christ, Divine justice crieth, "It shall die;" but when that soul doth really come to Christ, the same unchanged justice crieth, "It shall live." For why? Have we not seen this coming to be faith? Is not "the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all them that believe?" Can God's justice reject

God's righteousness? Surely, then, the soul, made the very righteousness of God in coming unto Jesus, has even the awful justice of Jehovah ranked upon its side. Astounding triumph of the grace of God! O, is not the very essence of the Almighty, the eternal seal of this most blessed truth, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out?"

Men and brethren, what say you to it? what think ye of Christ, whose word it is? "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," for the joyful sound, and for the text as one of the silver trumpets that proclaim the Gospel jubilee. Can you hear it, and your soul remain unmoved? *During life* it is divinest melody to the anxious heart; for, while the day of grace continues, it tells that space is given to come to Christ, and that there is certainty of acceptance in coming. *At death*, how cheering are its notes? It tells the believer that his foundation on Christ is sure, and though, like the godly James Durham of old, it may be "the only promise to which he can *grip*," he has in it an "anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." Yea, let the dying blasphemer but hear and accept this faithful saying. Even then shall he find, like the thief upon the cross, that he shall not be cast out. And *after death* will the text be forgotten? Forgotten *now* by many, it will be forgotten *then* by none. Alas, one shrieking company shall, with gnashing teeth, eternally bewail—"We are cast out, but it is because we would not come;" but there are endless halleluias from a glorified throng—"True are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

"Thy call we heard, thy word we find it true,  
Draw nigh to me, I will draw nigh to you.  
Why art thou fearful? wherefore didst thou doubt?  
For him that cometh I will not cast out."

Wherefore, dear brethren, in addition to all the verifications of the text which have been noticed, seek to verify it in your own experience. Point out a case, one single case, of any who ever came to Christ and was rejected by him. There *is* none; there *can be* none. Have you put the matter to this trial? If you are yet unsaved, is it because Christ refused to save you when you went to him for salvation? You dare not so accuse the Lord of glory. If not accepted, you have not come. Therefore, by the mercies of God we beseech you to come now. You may never have another opportunity. O delay not! "Behold I come quickly," is an awful word. Are you ready to answer, "Amen; even so, come Lord Jesus?" Not unless you have first come to him. O then, what need for instant coming! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice."

Let me transpose the text, and read it thus—"Him that *cometh not* to me *I will* cast out." This also is true and certain as the oath of God. Ah! brethren, beware; for "*Cast him into outer darkness*," is

the true meaning of the latter clause when so transposed. If that sentence be once passed, it is an irrevocable decree. While it has not as yet been pronounced, hearken, I implore you, to the call, "Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come." As though God did beseech you by us, we once more repeat it, " Whosoever will let him come," and take with you, as from Christ's own lips, the promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." AMEN.

## SERMON XI.

THE DISCIPLES WAITING AT JERUSALEM FOR THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM COUSIN,

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"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me."  
—Acts i. 4.

CONVERSION to the individual soul and revival to the Church, is God's great end in the dispensation of grace. The means whereby this is accomplished is the manifestation of Jesus Christ, through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost as his witness. The Word of Truth is thus the instrument, the Holy Spirit the living agent, in every conversion, in every revival. Hence the personal reception of the truth and the personal presence of the Spirit are alike essential. The truth derives its life from the Spirit; the Spirit communicates his power through the truth. Hence in every case, whether of individual conversion or of general revival, the first and most promising symptom is increased, and increasing thirst for the Word, with increased and increasing dependence on the Spirit of God. There is no true conversion, there is no genuine revival, where either is wanting. Where the Word of God, in its public and private ministrations, is set aside or undervalued—whatever else is substituted in its place, no matter how good in itself—where the unadulterated Word of God does not hold the supremacy, the barrenness and sterility of nature will remain—leanness will enter the soul; for the soul is quickened, is matured in spiritual life, is sanctified, all by the Word of Truth. Thence (instrumentally) results the new birth; as it is written, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever:" thence proceeds growth in grace; as it is written, "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby:" thence progressive sanctification; as it is written, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth." And then, again, without prayerful and cherished dependence on the Spirit, there will be no depth or reality in spiritual exercises, whether in the individual soul, or in the community.

The Word of God itself is quick and powerful, only when used as the sword of the Spirit ; it is living and life-giving, only as the Spirit of Life is in it ; it is incorruptible only by the presence and power of the same Spirit who did not suffer God's Holy One to see corruption. Even in grace, viewed as a possession of man, there is nothing abiding ; it derives all its perpetuity from the continued ministrations of the Spirit, out of the fulness that is in Christ. There may be abundance of stir, and excitement, and bustling activity about the things of God—there may be high thoughts, proud imaginations, mighty doings—there may be tongue confessions, lip conversions, the melting of the eye when there is no contrition of the heart—but, apart from the Holy Ghost recognised in power and personal presence, there will be no real conversion—no genuine revival. You may have Herod, hearing gladly and doing many things, but retaining his besetting sin—Simon Magus, asking in his terrors an apostle's prayers, but persisting in the way to heresy and perdition—Felix, trembling on his throne, but stifling conviction and bidding it away till a more convenient season, to be troubled no more, till he feels it at his soul in the piercing torture of the worm that never dies. This, all this, nature may put forth, and man accomplish ; but the bowing down of the inner spirit before God—the new birth, whereby Christ is formed in the soul—the new creation, over which, with louder anthems than of old, the morning stars sing for joy and the angels hold jubilee—that mighty transformation in which old things pass away and all things become new—that stupendous work which outlives the shock of dissolution and reaches into eternity, co-extensive with the soul in its immortality—Oh, depend upon it, none less than the living Spirit of the Eternal himself can accomplish that. Before a single soul can be born again, the Almighty God must be at work in power and personal presence. Whosoever, therefore, would ever seek the conversion of a brother, or desire to be himself converted, must have direct and immediate dealings with God—must utter no word—must take no step but in solemn, reverential awe, in prayerful recognition of the Holy Ghost. And the Church that would be revived herself—that would seek the awakening of the dead around—must be content, first of all, to lie down in the dust, in the consciousness of helpless, hopeless insufficiency—emptied, humbled, self-abased—content to wait without wearying—alone with God—“waiting for the promise of the Father.”

To this, then, as the peculiar duty to which, in the present eventful crisis, we seem especially called, we propose, in dependence on the Spirit's promised aid, to direct our attention. Taking, with a view to this, the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in the second chapter, let us, as an example for ourselves, consider the preceding and

preparatory state of the early Church. Now, in looking at the account of the disciples between the ascension of our Lord and the day of Pentecost, we shall find they were waiting in devout expectancy—in earnest desire—in united prayer—in seclusion from the world—in fellowship with one another.

I. They were waiting in devout expectancy. They had been commanded to wait at Jerusalem for the “promise of the Father;” and expectation is essential to a patient waiting upon God. In many cases it is far easier to do much than to wait long. So the disciples must have felt it. Their hearts must have burned within them to go out upon the world with unhesitating confidence in the miraculous powers with which their Lord had promised to invest them, and in the strength of the marvellous message that they had to tell. But they had learned, amid recent events, a lesson of self-distrust. They had been commanded to wait at Jerusalem, and so, day after day, they waited on in silence, though charged with a message fitted, as they might suppose, to convert the world. Till they could speak in the spirit, they would not speak at all. They waited patiently—doing nothing at their own hand, because they waited expectingly. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” He will judge nothing—he will do nothing before the time. Till in the Spirit himself, he will not attempt to force the Spirit’s work. Such a state of expectancy is essential to a patient continuance in well-doing. Men will cease to wait in spirit upon God, except their expectation is from him. In every spiritual gift the Lord would have us to meet his faithfulness with our faith. Thus we honour his Word—thus, like himself, we “magnify his word above all his name.” It is unbelief, and not humility, to distrust the promise of the Father—to wait without expectancy for the coming of the Spirit. Without expectation there will be no truth—no reality—no fervency—no prevailing power in prayer. Prayer is not the mere instinctive utterance of desire, it is the utterance of desire for things known to be agreeable to God, and therefore expected. Through nature’s mere instinctive dread of suffering a man may wish salvation, but looking on it, in his unbelief, merely as a thing desirable for himself, and not as a thing agreeable to God, his wish is but a wish and nothing more. It is not prayer—it has no body—it has no point—it pierces not the heavy vapours of the overcharged heart—it has no buoyancy—no fervour—no prevailing power—it all evaporates in words, and dies away and leaves no blessing on the soul. Thus it is, that because men have ceased to expect the outpouring of the Spirit, the heavens have become as brass and the earth as iron. Because they see no cloud above their head, they will not

climb the mountain top to watch the little cloud that faintly fringes the horizon. Cleaving to the dust, with eye and soul intent upon the earth which they tread, they catch no refreshment, even when the wakening breeze begins to swell along the heights—even when the cloud, expanding over the heavens, opens up its dewy bosom and pours refreshing down upon God's weary heritage. They expect nothing—they wait for nothing—and that is all they get. For the law of God's dispensation of spiritual gifts is, according to thy faith, so shall it be unto thee. He who expects nothing, shall get nothing for others—shall carry away nothing for himself. But open thou thy mouth wide and he will fill it. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he will give thee all the desires of thine heart. Trust in him, and he will bring it all to pass. Plead the Father's promise, and be assured of the Father's performance. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afra off.

II. If we would partake in the fulness of the Pentecostal blessing, we must, like the disciples, be found waiting in earnest desire for the promise of the Father.

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is the life of the soul—the plentiful out-pouring of the Spirit is the life of the Church. It is in the heart of the believer—it is in the bosom of the Church—that the promise of the Father first takes effect, and the first symptom of it generally is, the panting of the soul after God—the longing of God's weary heritage for a season of refreshing and revival. And such a season of revival, when it comes to any portion of the Church, awakening new desires, communicates a new impulse to the entire body of Christ. It embodies abstract truth in living form—it presents things spiritual to the senses—it imparts power to things unseen—it brings eternity near, and makes it one of the realities of life. To the dim, the distant, the unfelt, it gives distinctness, nearness, realizing power—it arouses the Church from her slumbers—it arrests the Church in her distractions—it calls her from the stir and eager life that are in the world to contemplate the stir and life of a new existence, springing up within her own domain. In her deadness, it comes and tells of reviving life—in her weakness, it comes and tells of returning power—in her hopelessness, it comes and tells of opening prospects of success—when dispirited with speaking all day long in vain to a gainsaying people, it comes and tells that the voice of the Lord is again awakening in the preached word—when forlorn and sad, as she stands gazing round upon the dead whom she cannot stir, it comes and tells that the dry bones are at last beginning to move beneath the breath of God—when parched and

withered, with the heavens above her head as brass and the earth beneath her feet as iron, it comes and tells that the little cloud is already fringing the horizon—that already there is the sound of abundance of rain. And thus it gives hope a new object—zeal a new impulse—energy a new direction. Thus, whether we would have a season of refreshing within our own borders, or would send an awakening impulse to those that are without, we cannot but long for the outpouring of the Spirit in Pentecostal fulness on the Church. In the absence of the Spirit we can work no deliverance in the earth—we can communicate no throbbing pulse of spiritual life to the dead in trespasses and sins; and for ourselves we can have no comfort, no enlargement, no refreshing fellowship with God, no winning sense of his forgiving love, no feeling of friendship and communion with Jesus, no unburdening of the heart into his ear, no healing application of his blood, but by the Holy Ghost. It is only by his quickening touch that the soul is conscious of the present Godhead—only when reposing under his overshadowing wing that the Church hears the voice of her beloved, and sees him as the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Hence, as she desires to feel and recognise the presence of the Son, she sighs in earnest longings for the promise of the Father.

III. If we would have a plentiful outpouring of the Spirit, we must, like the Disciples, be found in earnest and united prayer; Acts i. 14.

Prayer is the spontaneous offspring of expectation and desire. It is hope's utterance before God. It is faith, recognising God as reconciled through Jesus Christ, and asking forgiveness in his name—recognising him as the giver of every good and perfect gift, and asking whatever it wants—recognising him as the hearer and answerer of prayer, and taking its range through covenant blessings, to ask whatever is agreeable to his will. Give faith a promise, and immediately it will transform it into a prayer. Hence, wherever faith exists at all, the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the special promise of the Father, becomes the object of special prayer. As promised, it is expected; as good, it is desired; as freely given, it is frankly asked. Hence, prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit is the first and most prominent characteristic of the regenerated soul, of the awakened or awakening Church, believing prayer in every form. Secret prayer is the life of the individual; social prayer, of the community; congregational prayer, of the Church. The soul that lives in the neglect of secret prayer is dead, dead beyond all question, and still under God Almighty's curse. Whatever other signs of life there may be, if there is a habitual neglect of secret prayer, *the soul is dead*. Family prayer is no substitute—cannot, indeed, as a



spiritual exercise exist without secret prayer—in close personal intercourse with God. And as for social meetings for prayer, to be of any avail for real spiritual good, they must be inspired and anointed throughout by a life derived in secret communion from Jesus as living head, and be composed of souls already enkindled at the secret altar, whose light is from the holy anointing oil, fresh down from the golden vessels of the sanctuary above. Secret prayer—increased and still increasing—secret prayer—must be the preparative and accompaniment of every other spiritual duty—must precede, in order to prepare—must accompany, in order to maintain alive—must follow, in order to secure a blessing to every other kind of service. Then, oh then, my friends what meetings ye might have, though but two or three of you together, were each to bring the life, the fervour, the heaven-breathing spirituality of soul, just come down from meeting alone with God upon the mount. These are the united prayers that have power with God, and they are the spontaneous growth of the prayerful spirit. For so soon as the people of God in any neighbourhood are baptized with the spirit of prayer, they will come to know each other by a secret sympathy, they will be drawn together by a secret tie; and nothing so attracts the eye, and wins the heart of God, as little flocks of his redeemed and ransomed people, gathered together for prayer and spiritual converse. He hearkens and hears, and writes all down in the book of his remembrance. “And they shall be mine”—says the Lord, putting in his claim against the devil, and the world, and the flesh—“they shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels;” Mal. iii. 16, 17. The Father rejoices over such meetings for united and expecting prayer; for it opens up to him a channel for pouring down the streams of life—for meeting their largest desires with a still larger outpouring of his Spirit; and Jesus, oh how he rejoices over his redeemed and ransomed people, gathered two or three of them together in his name, for he knows—he knows what blessings they will get; in the yearnings of his Father’s love he sees what is coming, in the stirrings of his own heart he feels what treasured grace they are drawing from his own abundant fulness; and the Spirit himself rejoices, for he is ever on the wing to hasten down and join such little companies. And oh, believe it, never does a little company of God’s people meet with one accord in one place to wait for the Spirit, but the living, loving spirit comes, in one form or another, in power and personal presence—comes into the midst of them. He awakes in them the expectation, he stirs up in them the desire for his presence, and then, in the fulness of his love, he meets the desire he has awakened, by coming gladly down. Invoked in expectation and desire, he comes—it may be like the soft-distilling dew, so silent, so gentle, so refreshing—or it may

be like floods upon the dry ground, so full, so pervading, so strong—or it may be as a rushing mighty wind, shaking all the house in which they sit, and sending out a strange attractive power upon the world around. Even so, come from the four winds, O breath! Awake O north wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out, and my beloved may come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

IV. If we would have for our ourselves, or for the Church, a plentiful outpouring of the Spirit, we must be found like the disciples in seclusion from unnecessary intercourse with the world.

“Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works.” Hence, he says, “A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” The very idea comprised in holiness is separation unto the Lord. Hence dedication unto God, and separation from the spirit of the world, are conjoined by the Holy Ghost. “I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world.” Rom. xii. 1, 2. There are, indeed, duties which we owe in the various relations of society from which it is not the will of God to call us away. “I pray not,” said Jesus, “that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” With all this, however, there must be habitual separation unto God on the part of his people, and seclusion from unnecessary intercourse in the assemblies of ungodly men. When we do meet them, let it be with kindness and affability, in the spirit of Christian love. When called upon to mingle in their society, let it be in the spirit of Him who mixed in the company of publicans and sinners, in order, by his gentle counsels, to win them to *himself*. And this, dear brethren, by those who have the grace of a meek and quiet spirit, in union with Christian fortitude, may be done without anything like wranglings and disputings, and table controversy, as it is written by the Holy Ghost. Phil. ii. 14–16. There must not be the spirit of controversy, for “the servant of the Lord must not strive;” but there must be no concession, no compliance, no compromise. But, beloved brethren, remember the wisdom, the realizing faith, the devotedness, the holy zeal, for God, whereby alone we may attain to this when mingling in the world, can be secured only by habitual seclusion *from* it in a prayerful walk with God. This indeed is essential for every good and holy purpose—for every spiritual exercise. There can be no growth in grace—no heavenly mindedness—no spirituality, save as we seek to live secluded

from the world's vanities, and estranged from the world's spirit. The Holy Dove will not come to us in the crowd, nor abide with us in the uncongenial atmosphere of the world. No, beloved, if we would be found living in the enjoyment of God's forgiving love, of pure and comfortable fellowship with Jesus Christ ourselves, or waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Church—we must court retirement—we must be much alone with God—we must shun the stir, the tumult, the distraction of heart that are engendered by the world—we must avoid exposure to the wearing, wasting, withering frivolity of its ordinary tone and spirit in society. It is when the doors are closed and the world is shut out, that Jesus comes to his little flock, and, to confirm their faltering faith and melt their stony hearts, shews them the very prints the nails have made in his hands—the very scar the spear has made in his bleeding side—comes with power upon his lips, and love in every tone of his voice, and breathes on them and says, *RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST.*

V. If we would be partakers with the disciples in the outpouring of the Spirit, we must, like them, not only live secluded from the world, but often meet together with one accord in one place. Acts i. 12-14; ii. 1.

The Lord loves to see his family dwelling together in unity. Equally near and dear to himself, he loves to see them near and dear to one another. Ye that are parents, can you not understand our Father's feeling in this? Do you not love to see your children all flocking together, and preferring each other's company to that of every other? Is there any time you are so disposed to bless them in your hearts as when you see them happy in each other's society, making your hearts and homes rejoice in the mingling voices of their love? Is there anything so opens your heart as when they come all together waiting for some promised gift of love—anything so touching to your sensibilities as when one comes asking some favour for the rest? If then, ye being evil, are so gladdened by the union of heart and hand in your families, rejoicing in each other's joys, reflecting each other's feelings, bearing in remembrance each other's wants—if, in such circumstances, ye, being evil, know to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father rejoice over his family—how much more will he give them the Holy Ghost on asking it? God is doubtless to be found wherever there is a humble and believing heart, but nowhere surely in such manifested love as in the bosom of his loving family, met together to wait for the promise of their Father. "Tell me," says the spouse, when in search of her beloved, "tell me, oh thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest,

where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon ; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ?” “ If,” he replies, “ if thou know not, oh thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Song i. 7, 8. The way to find the shepherd of Israel, who leadeth Joseph as a flock, is for the sheep to keep together walking in each other’s steps ; for should they lose him, he would soon seek out them—for where the sheep of his pasture be, there his heart’s affections are. Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12.

It is our strength and safety, beloved brethren, to walk together through the wilderness—to keep together on the battle-field. Elsewhere we may meet with gay and pleasant companions ; but travelling to a different land, they cannot be followed as guides—arrayed under hostile banners, they cannot be trusted as friends. Hosea vii. 8, 9. The world knows us not. It cannot enter into our feelings, nor understand our solitudes, nor give counsel in our perplexities. It cannot partake in our privileges, nor share our hopes, nor sympathize in our sorrows, nor comprehend our joys. It cannot weep with us when we weep, nor rejoice with us when we rejoice. But in the family of God, redeemed by the same precious blood, sealed and annointed with the same quickening Spirit, holding of the same living Head, we may, we ought, to find the friends to whom, as subject to the same temptations, encompassed with the same weakness, passing through the same experience, we may open up our hearts, explain our difficulties, and seek counsel in our spiritual perplexities—to whom we may impart in confidence every wish, every weakness of our heart. Thus, brethren, we might bear each other’s burden, and be helpers of each other’s joy. But for this, our intercourse would require to be differently regulated than even among Christians it is. We would require to meet less as mere friends and acquaintances—more as brethren and members of the family of God. Our conversation would require to partake more of heaven, to be more serious, more spiritual, more devout, more open—more fragrant, above all things, with the name of Jesus. It would need to be preceded, to be pervaded, by more of prayer ; for never does the child of God require to be more watchful unto prayer than in entering company, not of the world alone, but of God’s own people, so as to be kept mindful of his high vocation, and to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing. For remember, brethren, our life must be our religion, or our religion is nothing. Wherefore, dearly beloved, “ let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another ; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

Such, beloved brethren, is the spirit, and such the attitude in which it becomes the disciples of the Lord to be found waiting for the promise of the Father. It is an object of universal interest; for as the future coming of the Lord Jesus is the Church's hope, the present outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the Church's heritage. The child of God can never cease to long for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, so long as he feels any deadness in his own heart, or sees so many dead souls around. The love of Christ will constrain him to sigh after a closer walk with God himself, and will give him no rest till he sees others walking in the light along with him. And let none of you think, dear brethren, that you are too young, or too inexperienced, or too little advanced in the Christian life, to be entitled or called upon to become intercessors with God for the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. The most acceptable offerings you can present to God, upon your own conversion, are the yearnings of your heart over dead souls, and your earnest pleadings for the promise of the Father. If your faith be weak, if your views be dark, if your hearts be straitened, rest assured nothing will tend more to impart realizing power to faith, to cause light to arise in darkness, to give freedom and enlargement in the straitening of the heart, than dealing closely and confidently with Jesus for the promised season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Dealing with God apart, for the time, from the fears and solitudes of personal interest and anxiety, the soul gets accustomed to contemplate him upon the mercy-seat as reconciled in Jesus Christ, and warms unconsciously in the sense of his forgiving love. Song vii. 11, 12. It is from Jesus that the Spirit comes; it is to Jesus that the Spirit points. Hence it is in looking unto Jesus you are to expect the Spirit; in seeing Jesus more clearly, you will recognise and feel the Spirit's presence when he comes; for he is ever proceeding from before the throne of Jesus; he is ever shining on his cross. As the living Head, Jesus secures and dispenses the Spirit to man; as the living Witness, the Spirit enlightens and draws men to Jesus. If, therefore, we would bring back the Spirit in his absence, we must wait upon the throne of grace; if we would enjoy the Spirit in his presence, we must linger round the cross. Thus it is in dealing with Jesus that we receive the promise of the Father; and in receiving the promise of the Father, we are linked in a covenant that never shall be broken, unto Jesus, as our covenant Head.

## SERMON XII.

THE CONSOLATIONS OF CHRIST ADAPTED TO THE STATE AND CHARACTER  
OF HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. ROBERT S. CANDLISH, D.D., EDINBURGH.

John xi. 21.—“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”—v. 32.—“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

“It is better,” says the wise man, “to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning: but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.” And if this be true generally of the effect which should be produced by familiarizing the heart with the devout contemplation of death, and of the grief which death occasions, it must be so especially when we have Jesus as our companion. Often, during our Lord’s visits to Jerusalem, we find him gladly retreating in the evenings, after the toils and trials of his daily ministry in the Temple, to the quiet village of Bethany, and the peaceful abode of Lazarus, and there reposing amid the holy endearments of a congenial family circle. Now we are about to visit with him this house as the house of mourning, and to observe how he is received there, and how his presence cheers the gloom. 1. The sisters, both of them, greet him with the same pathetic salutation, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;” and this might seem to indicate an entire similarity in their sorrow. 2. But if we look a little closer, we see a striking difference of demeanour, corresponding to the great general difference of their characters. 3. And this difference is marked in our Lord’s different treatment of them. From this study we shall learn—1st, How much sameness there is in grief; 2d, How much variety; 3d, How much compass in the consolation of Christ, as capable of being adapted to all varieties of grief, to grief of every mould and of every mood. We speak chiefly throughout of the grief of Christians; for we think we may assume that, notwithstanding their great contrast in respect of natural temperament, the two sisters were partakers of the same grace.

SER. 12.—No. 12.

I. It is remarkable that two persons so different in their turn of mind, so apt to view things in different lights, and to be affected by them with different feelings, should both utter the same words, on first meeting the Lord Jesus—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It shows how natural such a reflection is in such a season—how truly the heart, when deeply moved, is the same in all—and how much all grief is alike. The sisters, however otherwise dissimilar, were united in their affection for their departed brother, and in their grateful reliance on that Friend "who loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." They had sat and watched together beside their brother's bed of sickness. They joined together in sending unto Jesus, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." In their distress they both thought of the same remedy, and applied to the same physician. It was a joint petition that they despatched, and they did not doubt that it would prevail. Together they waited anxiously for his coming. They reckoned the very earliest moment when he could arrive; and as they looked on their brother's languid eye, and saw him sinking every hour and wasting away, ah! they thought how soon their benefactor might appear, and all might yet be well. But moments and hours rolled on, and no Saviour came. Wearisome days and nights were appointed to them. Often did they look out and listen; often did they fancy that they heard the expected sound, and the well-known accents of kindness seemed to fall upon their ears. But still he came not. Ah! what were their anxious thoughts, their earnest communings, their fond prayers, that life might be prolonged at least for a little longer, to give one other chance, one other opportunity, for the interposition of Him who was mighty to save even from the gates of death; and how were their own hearts sickened, as they whispered to the sick man a faint hope, which now they could scarcely themselves believe. Still the time rolls slowly on. The last ray of expectation is extinguished; the dreaded hour is come; it is over; their brother has fallen asleep; Lazarus is dead. And now four days are past and gone since he has been laid in the silent tomb. The first violence of grief is giving place to the more calm, but far more bitter pain of a desolate and dreary sadness, the prolonged sense of bereavement which recollection brings along with it, and which everything around serves to aggravate and embitter. The house of mourning, after the usual temporary excitement, is still,—it is the melancholy stillness of the calm darkly brooding over the wrecks of the recent storm,—and amid the real kindness of sympathising friends, and the formal attentions of officious strangers, the sisters, as each familiar object recalls the past, are soothing, or suppressing, as best they may, those bitter feelings which their own hearts alone can know; when suddenly they are told that Jesus is at hand. He is

come at last, but he is come too late. Still his coming at all is a comfort ; he is welcome as their own and their brother's friend ; he is welcome as their Lord. They never doubt his friendship ; they question not his willingness, or his power, to do them good. But still, as they meet him, they cannot but look back on the few days that are gone ; and as all their anxieties and alarms, their longing hopes and cruel disappointments rush again upon their minds, they are constrained to give utterance to the crowded emotions of their hearts in the irrepressible exclamation, " Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

It is the voice of nature that speaks in these words—the voice of our common nature mingling its vain regrets with the resignation of sincere and simple faith.

1. There is the feeling that the event *might* have been otherwise. " If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." We know not what it was that detained thee, what prevented thee from coming : perhaps our message did not reach thee in time, or some casual circumstance hindered thee. Had this sickness happened but a little sooner, when thou wast in Jerusalem at the feast : or had we taken alarm soon enough, so as to send for thee before our brother was so ill ; or had our messenger been more expeditious, and used more despatch ; or had we been able but to lengthen out by our care, our brother's sickness for a single week ; had we not been so unfortunate in the occurrence of this evil just when it did occur ; or had we but used more diligence, and taken more precaution—then thou mightst have been here, and if thou hadst been here, our brother had not died.

Ah, is it not thus that the heart speaks under every trying dispensation ? Is it not thus that an excited imagination whispers to the forlorn soul ? Which of you has ever met with any affliction—which of you has ever lost any dear friend, without cherishing some such delusion as this ? If such or such a measure had been adopted ; if such or such an accident had not happened ; if it had not been for this unaccountable oversight, or that unforeseen and unavoidable mischance, so grievous a calamity would not have befallen me ; my brother would not have died. Alas ! and is not this altogether a sad delusion, proceeding upon a very limited view of the power and the providence of God your Saviour ? How did these sisters know that, if Jesus had been there, their brother would not have died ? How could they tell whether he might not have ends to serve, which would have required that, even though he had been there, he should yet have permitted him to die ? And were they not aware that, though he was not there, yet, if he had so chosen and so ordered it, their brother would not have died ? Had they not heard of his being able at the distance of many a long mile, to effect an immediate and complete



cure? Did they not believe that he had but to speak, and it would be done; he had but to say the word, and, however far off he was, his friend and their brother would be healed? Ah! they had forgotten who it was to whom they made this most touching and pathetic appeal; that he was one who, though not outwardly present, could have restored their brother, if it had been consistent with his wise and holy will; and who, even if he had been present, might yet have seen fit, for the best ends, to permit him to die.

And are not these the very truths concerning him which you in your distress are tempted to forget, when you dwell so much on secondary circumstances and causes, instead of at once and immediately recognising his will as supreme? You are overtaken by misfortune; you are overwhelmed in the depths of sorrow. You ascribe your suffering to what seems to be its direct occasion, whether it be your own neglect of some precaution which you might have taken, had you thought of it in time, or the fault of others with whose skill or diligence your dearest hopes were inseparably connected, or something perhaps in the course of events over which neither you nor they could have any control. You fix upon the very date, the very scene, when and where your brother's doom seems to have been sealed; and you think that, if you had but suspected what was about to be the issue, or if the help which now you see would have been available had then been within your reach—if you had been warned in time, or had taken the warning, or had been able to employ the most effectual means of escape, you might not now have been left disconsolate to mourn; your brother might still have been spared to cheer you with his smiles, to share with you all your cares.

Dear brethren, is not this idea, however natural, is it not, in reality, the very folly of unbelief—the dream of a soul forgetting that the Lord reigneth? What! is it come to this, that you conceive of him as limited by events which he himself ordains—as the slave of his own laws? You think that if such or such an obstacle had not intervened, this calamity would not have happened. But, notwithstanding that obstacle, might he not, if he had seen fit, have found means to avert the calamity? and are you sure that, even if that obstacle had been removed, he might not have seen fit still to suffer the calamity to befall you? If thou hadst been here, say the sisters, our brother had not died. Nay, he might have answered, I might have been here, if it had seemed good to me; but though I was not here, I might have kept thy brother alive; and though I had been here, I might have allowed him to die. O, look beyond second causes to Him who is the first cause of all things. Believe and be sure that the circumstances which you regret as the occasion of your misfortune are but the appointed means of bringing about what he

determines, and what, without them equally well as with them, he might accomplish. If evil come upon you, if your brother die, it is not because this or that accident prevented relief; it is not because He was not there in time, but because it was his will. O, be still and know that he is God.

2. There may be in this address of the two sisters somewhat of the feeling, that the event *should* have been otherwise. There is at least an intimation that they had expected that the event *would* have been otherwise. "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,"—and why wert thou not here? We sent unto thee—we sent a special message—a special prayer—and surely thou mightst have been persuaded to come. Ah! why didst thou linger for two whole days after tidings of our threatened loss reached thee? Why didst thou not make haste to help us? We could not believe that thou wouldst have treated us thus. Thou wast not unmindful of us before. Thou didst regard us as friends. Thou didst bless our house with thy presence. Thou didst make it thy home—thou didst choose us before thine own kinsmen. Thou didst select our brother as the object of thine especial affection. And we thought that it had been enough to touch thy heart simply to send to thee, saying "He whom thou lovedst is sick,"—that thou hadst but to hear of his illness to rush at once to his relief. True, we had no right to dictate to thee, and now we have no right to complain. But we cannot help feeling that if thou hadst been here our brother had not died, and surely thou mightst have been here. It was not so very great a favour that was asked of thee; and was he not worthy for whom thou shouldst do this? He loved thee,—he trusted in thee, and thou mightst have come, if not to preserve his life, at least to soothe and satisfy his dying hours. He looked for thee, and thou didst not appear. To the very last he waited for thee, and thou didst hide thyself. He missed thee, and he was not comforted.

Such are the instinctive complaints of nature, in a season of sore trial, of bitter bereavement. Thus does the wounded soul rise against the stroke that pierces it, and turn round upon the hand that smites it. O, it is hard often for flesh and blood to believe in regard to any crushing load of woe, that it is God who directly and immediately ordains it. It is far harder to believe, that in ordaining it, he does not do wrong. Simply, to be still, and know that it is God, is no easy exercise of resignation. To be sure that He doeth right, that He doeth well, is even more difficult still. You fancy that if He had really been here, it would have happened otherwise,—your brother would not have died. And you feel as if you thought that he should have been here,—that it should have happened otherwise—that your brother should not have died. And you can give, perhaps, many reasons why he should not.

You can point out many ends which might have been served had he been spared,—how faithful and successful he might have been,—how noble a course he might have run. He was just prepared for entering into active life; he was just newly fitted for the service of God in the world; and it does seem strange and unaccountable, that at the very time when his life seemed to have become most valuable—when his character was ripening for increased usefulness, and when the mere word of the Great Physician would have brought him back from the gates of death, he should yet have been left to die.

Ah, but remember that He may have many purposes in view with which you may be unacquainted, which indeed you could not as yet comprehend. Only wait patiently for a little, and you will see that “this sickness is not” really “unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” Would that thou hadst been here;—thou surely mightst have been here, is the natural language of the mourner to his Lord. Nay, says the Lord himself to his own disciples, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.” A hard saying this,—who can always hear it? But consider who it is that speaks. It is your friend, your Saviour, who might have been here, and might have caused that your brother should not die; and may you not be sure, that if it had been for his glory, and for your good, he would have been here, and would have caused that your brother should not have died? He might have ordered this matter otherwise, you say, and you almost think that he ought to have ordered it otherwise. But may you not believe that had it been right and good, he would have done so, and that if he has not, it must be for the best of reasons? What these may be you cannot tell. He may have need of your brother’s services elsewhere. He may intend to make his death the occasion of showing forth his glory, and blessing your soul. Only be patient, and hope unto the end. What he doeth you may not know now, but ye shall know hereafter. Meantime, as you are tempted to fancy that he might have interfered—nay, that he should have interfered,—to prevent the calamity under which you suffer, may not that very feeling, on second thoughts, suggest the conviction, that if he has not so interfered, it must be because he intends to make to you some gracious discovery of himself, and to confer upon you some special benefit? Be not hasty, then, to judge, but rest in the assurance that all things shall work together for your good. And though he may seem to stand aloof when you would most desire, and seem most to need his interposition—yet when he does come, be sure that you welcome and receive him gladly—as did the mourning sisters. For,

3. There is apparent in the address of the sisters, a sincere, though

melancholy satisfaction in meeting with Jesus at last. He had not come so soon as they expected. He had not come at the very time—in the very way—for the very purpose, that they could have liked—still when he did come, at whatsoever time, and for whatsoever purpose, he is welcome. He is come too late to do them that particular favour which they solicited. Still he is come for good, and gratefully do they receive him. “Lord, if thou hadst been here sooner, our brother had not died.” But thou art here now; and it is enough. True, our brother is dead—and if it had been possible, we would have had it otherwise. We thought that thou wouldst have come—we wondered that thou didst not come—for a time, perhaps, we entertained some doubtful and hard thoughts of thee as if surely thou mightst have come. But now that thou hast come, we are satisfied. We are sure that had it been possible, consistently with the high ends of thy ministry, and with our own real interest, thou wouldst have been here. We see that thou lovest and carest for us, and though thou didst not at once grant our request precisely as we desired, yet not the less on that account do we take thy visit kindly. Thou art still our best friend, our gracious Lord. We know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. At thy feet we will still lie down. That thou hast come at all, at our solicitation, is great condescension. That thou hast come in such an hour of trouble, is a peculiarly seasonable act of friendship.

O happy will it be for you, brethren, if in like circumstances you are enabled to feel as these sisters felt, and to meet your Saviour's gracious advances as they did. In the hour of blighted prospects, and disappointed hopes, when the evil which you deprecated has befallen you, you may think that consolation comes too late. Like Rachel, you may weep, and refuse to be comforted,—like Jonah, when your gourd withers, you may almost say that you do well to be angry. You may turn away when your Saviour draws near; you may sit disconsolate when he calls. If he had come for the purpose of averting the calamity, if he had been here sooner, and had interposed his power, it had been well, for then my brother had not died. But the calamity has overtaken me,—my brother is dead; and what avails it that He is here now?

Ah! beware of such impatience, such natural irritability of grief. Reject not the Saviour's visit of sympathy now, because he did not come to you exactly as you in your ignorance would have had him come, and do for you exactly what you would have had him do. It is enough that he is with you now, to speak comfortably to you—to bind up your broken heart—to fill the aching void in your affections, and be to you instead of all that you have lost. True; if he had been here before, your brother might not have died, and your brother now is dead. But he is here *now*.

*He is here who is better than a thousand brothers,—he who hath the words of eternal life; who, when flesh and heart faint, will be the strength of your heart and your portion for ever.*

Such might be the feelings common to the two sisters,—such are the feelings of nature mingled with grace, common to all sanctified grief—as indicated in the affecting address, “Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.”

II. But the sisters differed in their sorrow, as they did generally in their features of character, and their manner of thinking and acting in the ordinary affairs of life. They were persons of very different tempers and dispositions, and this difference is uniformly and strikingly brought out in their treatment of the Lord Jesus. Both looked up to him with reverence; both regarded him with full confidence and tender affection; and both were equally earnest and eager in testifying their esteem and love. But each in doing so followed the bent of her own peculiar turn of mind. Martha was distinguished by activity in the despatch of business. She seems to have possessed great quickness, and alertness, and energy, and a certain practical ability, and good sense; and thus she was well fitted for going through any work to be done, and always awake to the common calls and the common cares of the ordinary domestic routine of life. Mary again was evidently characterized by more depth of thought, more devotedness and sensibility of feeling. She was more easily engrossed in any affecting scene, or any spiritual theme; more alive at any time to one single profound impression, and apt to be abstracted from other concerns.

Hence we find it remarked, when our Lord formerly was received in their house, that, while Mary sat at his feet, and heard his word, Martha was cumbered with much serving. She was assiduous, and even officious, in her hospitable attempts to provide for the accommodation of her guest; and if Jesus had come to be ministered unto, he would have been most pleased with Martha's attention to all his wants. But as he came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, he found most delight in her sister Mary, who, with the meekness of a disciple, and the earnestness of a spiritually awakened soul, listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

And as their way of testifying regard to the Lord Jesus in prosperity was different, so also was their demeanour towards him in adversity. Martha first received information of his approach (ver. 20), either because to her, as the mistress of the house, the message was brought, or, because, going about the house, she was in the way of hearing intelligence. She rose in haste, impatient to meet the Lord, and to

render to him the offices of courtesy and respect. She is ready to be up and doing; she can turn at once from the conversation in which her friends from Jerusalem have been seeking to interest her, and disengage her mind for active exertion. Mary again is more absorbed in her grief; her sorrow is of a deeper and more desponding character. This the Jews remarked when they said of her, as they saw her at last rise hastily and go out, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. They had not said this of Martha, when she went forth. *She* might be bent on other errands. Mary could go—only to weep. And at first her feelings so overpower her as to prevent her from going at all. The sudden arrival of her brother's friend is a shock too great for her; it tears the wound open afresh, and recalls bitter thoughts. She is plunged by the tidings into a fresh burst of sorrow.

Thus in different circumstances, the same natural temper may be either an advantage or a snare. Martha was never so much occupied in the emotion of one scene or subject, as not to be quite ready for the call to another. This was a disadvantage to her when she was so hurried, that she could not withdraw herself from household cares to wait upon the word of life. It is an advantage to her now, that she can easily shake off her depression, and hasten of her own accord to meet her Lord. The same profound feeling, again, which made Mary the most attentive listener before, made her the most helpless sufferer now, and disposed her almost to nurse her grief, until Jesus, her Comforter, sent specially and emphatically to rouse her (ver. 28).

And when the two sisters meet Jesus, the difference is equally characteristic. Martha's grief is not so overwhelming as to prevent her utterance. She is calm, and cool, and collected enough to enter into argument. She can give expression to her convictions and her hopes. She can tell that her faith is not shaken even by so severe a disappointment. Having hinted what might seem to imply a doubt (verse 21), she is in haste to explain her meaning, and to give assurance of her undiminished confidence; and then as the conversation goes on, she is sufficiently self-possessed to make a formal declaration of her faith in Jesus as the author of eternal life. Not so her sister Mary. She indeed, when at last she is emboldened by her Master's kind message, goes forth to meet him, and her reverence, her devotion, her faith, are not less than those of Martha. But her heart is too full for many words. Her emotions, when she sees the Lord, she cannot utter. The passion of her soul she cannot command. She can but cast herself down, weeping, before him, and say, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." She adds not a word more. She lies prostrate and silent at his feet.

Such are the different aspects which sorrow wears in minds of different stamps, and of different degrees of strength and of sensibility. But whatever may be its aspect, it finds in Jesus, the Saviour, one who can speak to it a word in season. For,

III. His treatment of the two sisters, in his first meeting with them, was exactly suited to their respective tempers, and their different kinds of grief. Martha's distress was of such a nature that it admitted of discussion and discourse. She was disposed to converse, and to find relief in conversion. Jesus accordingly adapted his treatment to her case. He spoke to her, and led her to speak to him. He talked with her on the subject most interesting and most seasonable, on the resurrection of the body and the life of the soul. Martha had declared her unshaken trust in him as still having power to obtain from God all that he might ask. (ver. 22.) And a wild idea, perhaps, crossed her mind, that it might not even yet be too late, that the evil might, even now, be repaired. If so, it was but the fancy of a moment, the dreamy notion that sometimes haunts the desolate breast, when it strives in vain to realise the loss which it has sustained. A single sad thought brings back the recollection, to which she afterwards, in her characteristic spirit of attention to such details, adverts, that he has been now four days in the tomb, and corruption must be doing its horrid work upon his body. (ver. 39.) When, therefore, she hears her Lord's promise, "Thy brother shall rise again," she applies it to his share in the general resurrection at the Last Day. Jesus explains himself more fully. He speaks not of a resurrection merely, but of a resurrection in Him, not of life only, but of life in Him. "I am the resurrection and the life! he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" This is the only true comfort in respect of the future state. He is the only true Comforter, who can speak, not merely of the immortality of the soul, and of the resurrection of the body, but of himself as the life of the immortal soul, and the quickener of the risen body, the first begotten from the dead; the first fruits of them that sleep. Ah, what consolation is it that thy brother lives and will rise again! He lives in ME. He will rise with ME. And what is the life which I sustain? It is the very life which I impart now,—life before God—the life of a soul pardoned, justified, reconciled to God, renewed, and sanctified for ever. And what is the resurrection which I give? Resurrection to glory—when these vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto my glorious body. It is my own life that I impart to the believer now, and continue to him beyond the grave: it is of my own resurrection that I make him

a partaker hereafter, when I come again. These words alone shed light on the dark tomb of a lost brother, and the darker sorrow of a sister's heart. Yes; and though Martha understands not fully all that is intended by the assurance, "I am the resurrection and the life," she is relieved by having laid on her Divine friend the burden of her soul, and imparted her sorrows and her hopes to one who can so graciously commune with her concerning them all. And it is, therefore, with somewhat of a lightened heart, that she declares her entire acquiescence in his power, and her perfect trust in his goodness (ver. 27.) "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world."

When Mary, on the other hand, draws near in the anguish of silent woe, Jesus is differently affected, and his sympathy is shown in a different way. He is much more profoundly moved. He does not reply to her in words, for her own words were few. Grief has choked her utterance, and overmastered her soul. But the sight of one so dear to him, lying in such helpless anguish at his feet, is an appeal to him far stronger than any supplication, and his own responsive sigh is an answer more comforting than any promise. When he saw her weeping, he groaned in spirit, and was troubled. And when he had asked of the bystanders, "Where have ye laid him?" and received the reply, "Come and see," like Joseph, he could not refrain himself—Jesus wept. O most blessed mourner, with whose tears thy Saviour mingles his own! O, sympathy most unparalleled! To each of the two mourners the Lord addressed the very consolation that was most congenial. To Martha he gave exceeding great and precious assurances, in words such as never man spake. To Mary he communicated the groanings of his spirit, in language more expressive to the heart than all spoken words. With Martha, Jesus discoursed and reasoned. With Mary, Jesus wept.

O what a friend is this! What a brother; yea, and far more than a brother; and how confidently may you come to him, ye Christian mourners, in every season of trial. For, surely, he will give you the very cordial, the very refreshment of which you stand in need. He is a patient hearer if you have anything to say to him; and he will speak to you as you are able to bear it. Your complaints, your regrets, your expostulations, your very remonstrances almost, and upbraidings, may all be expressed to him. He will pity. He will comfort. His Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance what Christ has said suitable to your case. He will recal to you the Saviour's gracious words of eternal life, and suggest to you considerations fitted to dissipate your gloom, and put a new song in your mouth. And even if you cannot collect your thoughts, and order your words aright—if you are dumb with silence when your



sorrow is stirred, and as you muse your heart is hot within you—oh remember, that with these very groanings which cannot be uttered, the Spirit maketh intercession for you. And they are not hid from him, who, when he saw Mary weeping, groaned and was troubled, and wept. Oh, there is enough of all varied consolation in this blessed book, which all throughout testifies of Jesus. For the sorrow that seeks vent in words, and desires by words also to be soothed, there is the Saviour's open ear—there are the Saviour's lips into which grace was poured. For the grief that is dumb and silent, there are the Saviour's tears.

We have set before you, brethren, two characters. We have seen how they appeared in the ordinary scenes of life, and how they manifested themselves in the chamber of sickness—in the house of mourning. On their comparative excellencies and defects respectively, we pronounce no judgment, farther than what may be gathered incidentally from the narrative, as the judgment of the Lord himself. But we would say to you, in conclusion, of Mary's fervency of spirit as compared with Martha's diligence in business,—this ye ought to cherish, but not to leave the other undone. There is a tendency to regard religion as consisting chiefly in services rendered to the Lord Jesus, and attention and observance paid to him; in ministering busily, if not to his person, yet to his cause and the affairs of his kingdom. And there is a danger, in days especially when much is to be done, of substituting a certain bustling activity, and liberality, and zeal in the work of the Lord, for deep and devoted piety in waiting upon his word. Never forget, then, that Mary chose the better part. What Jesus chiefly wants is to see you rather sitting at his feet, than cumbered about much serving, rather that you should ask and receive from him, than that you should make a merit of rendering much service to him. But beware of supposing that there is any inconsistency or incompatibility between these two habits of mind. The tempers of the two sisters may be united and blended. Be it your study and your prayer that they may be so in you. Be you as fervent in spirit as Mary was—as diligent in business as Martha was. Choose the privilege of waiting upon the Word of the Lord—yet, neglect not the Work of the Lord. Be active, be energetic, be liberal, and abound more and more in that work. Seize every opportunity, answer every call of usefulness,—while, at the sametime, you cultivate the holy taste for meditative retirement, divine fellowship, and heavenly rest;—even as He did, who went about doing good, and of whom also it is written, that he spent the night in prayer. Then may you entertain the confident hope, that, in seasons of affliction, yours will be the blessedness of uniting both the portions of consolation which the sisters separately received. Jesus will speak to you as he did to Martha. Jesus will weep with you as he did with Mary.

**AMEN.**

## SERMON XIII.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM GILSTON, CARNOCK.

THE BELIEVER WARNED AGAINST DISTRUST AND PRESUMPTION.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."—PHILIP. iv. 6.

THERE is a two-fold danger to which the people of God are exposed in regard both to their temporal and to their spiritual concerns. On the one hand, they are prone to become distrustful of the providence and the promise of God, and thus to be so distracted and perplexed, as to be unable to avail themselves of the means of promoting either their temporal or their spiritual good; and, on the other hand, they are prone to cherish a presumptuous confidence, which renders them indifferent to the use of means, and which often leads them to expect results, which can scripturally be looked for only in connection with the Divine arrangements and institutions in the economy of grace.

Now, it is against this two-fold danger, we apprehend, that the Apostle provides in the words of our text. This exhortation—"be careful for nothing"—is evidently designed to discountenance and to restrain all diffidence and distrust on the part of believers in reference to the Divine arrangements respecting them. And his admonition—"but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God"—is as evidently designed to check all presumptuous confidence on the part of believers, and to shut them up to the exercise of a simple and abiding dependence upon God, and to the prayerful use of those means of grace which God has appointed for the spiritual comfort and improvement of his people.

I. "Be careful for nothing." The language of the Apostle does at first sight appear startling and paradoxical. Shall we, indeed, we may be tempted to ask, cease from all care in regard both to our temporal and to our eternal interests, and fold our hands to sleep, notwithstanding the many urgent motives by which we are excited to diligence in what pertains both to the life which now is, and to the life which is to come? Is there no call for activity and watchfulness in respect either of bodily or of spiritual things? Can we safely or innocently allow ourselves to have

a care about nothing that concerns either our present or our future well-being? Does the language of the Apostle, in the exhortation before us, forbid all solicitude about either the meat which perisheth, or that meat which endureth unto eternal life? Such an interpretation of the Apostle's meaning, indeed, would well coincide with man's natural indolence and sloth, and might well be alleged as an excuse for his indifference and apathy in reference to Divine things, and might justly be appealed to in vindication of that antinomian spirit which leads men to regard themselves at liberty to act as they list, and even to sin presumptuously and wilfully without any fear as to the consequences. But such an interpretation of the Apostle's meaning, it is evident, must be held as plainly and directly opposed, not only to the explicit declarations of holy writ, but to all those principles and motives which the Holy Spirit employs, both in leading men to an acquaintance with the truth, and in carrying them forward in the Divine life. The injunction of Scripture to the people of God is, that they be not slothful in business, and that they give all diligence to make their calling and their election sure; and the whole arrangements of God, both in providence and in grace, in reference to his people, are in perfect consistency with these explicit declarations of the Divine will.

When the Apostle says in our text, therefore, "be careful for nothing," he is not to be understood as forbidding the exercise of care and diligence in regard to what concerns either the body or the soul. It is not care, but carefulness—it is not watchfulness, but distracting anxiety—it is not persevering diligence, but unbelieving fearfulness—which his exhortation forbids. It is such a carefulness and overweening solicitude about either temporal or spiritual matters as implies distrust of the Divine faithfulness, and as unfits the mind for determining rightly the course that should be pursued. Sincerity and earnestness in the discharge of all commanded duty are not only not forbidden, but clearly implied in the exhortation of our text. But all that distraction of mind in regard to duty which unfits for the right performance of it, and all that distrustfulness which implies a doubt as to the Divine faithfulness in regard to the Divine promises and purposes, are clearly and unequivocally condemned. Diligence and zeal in all matters of duty are most consistent with the Apostle's command before us; but carefulness about such matters, an inordinate and distracting solicitude and anxiety about them, a perplexing and soul-harrassing care in regard to them, are what the Word of God forbids. And these things this Word forbids, because they are sinful, because they are dishonouring to God, because they imply distrust in his veracity and power, and because they prove strong hindrances in the way of the believer's advancement in spirituality and in holiness.

It is the design of the Word to shew believers their utter weakness and insufficiency in themselves, and to withdraw them from all confidence in themselves, and to lead them to cast their burden upon Him who alone can bear it for them, who is willing to relieve them of its pressure, who affords them consolation and strength amidst their sorrows and their weakness, and who is grieved when they distrust his faithfulness and his power in what regards their good.

It is true, indeed, that even in regard to temporal things, the believer's condition may be, and often is, hard and trying to flesh and blood. It often happens that the people of God have to contend with many outward evils to which unbelieving men are strangers. The circumstances of their lot upon the earth are often such as sorely tempt them anxiously to say, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" And it is not to be wondered at, that amidst privations, and the sorrows which are often the companions of our outward condition in life, faith should be apt to fail them, and they should be moved to exclaim, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Still, however, every one who rightly considers the matter, must admit that the exhortation of the Apostle in our text, like the command of the Saviour, "Take no thought for the morrow"—is most righteous and wise, most suited to the condition of the people of God on the earth, and most salutary in its influence upon the sentiments and the conduct of all by whom it is embraced. For who does not perceive how strongly a contrary disposition tends to increase the burden which these outward evils impose—and how greatly it multiplies the difficulties which lie in the way of their removal—and how much it unfits the mind either for bearing up under their pressure, or for being rightly exercised by them, and providing against them? Men's overweening anxiety about the evils of their condition, is often found to add to the pressure of these evils, but never to remove or to lighten their burden. Their unbelieving fears and solicitude as to the issue of their troubles, have often prevented men from taking a right view of these troubles, but have never enabled them either to endure them in a right frame of mind, or to adopt the proper means for their removal. The truth is, when men lose sight of God, as connected with the evils which they are called to bear in their journey through the world; and when they overlook the fact that the difficulties and privations and afflictions to which they are now subjected, are part of the discipline by which their heavenly Father seeks to wean them from the world; and to prepare them for himself; they not only will perceive no out-going to their sorrows, but will find these sorrows multiplied, and all their ills increased. And, therefore, as the natural effect of that inordi-

nate carefulness of spirit which the Apostle forbids in the text, is to produce such a result, most wisely and most mercifully does he act towards believers, even under the most trying outward circumstances, when he presses upon their attention the injunction, "Be careful for nothing."

But if even the poorest of God's people are urged to "be careful for nothing," in respect of temporal good things—to indulge in no overweening anxiety about the means of their outward comfort and sustenance—surely those among them who are rich in this world's goods, should beware of giving way to all distracting cares as to these things, and to all unbelieving fears in regard to their outward state and condition. The fact of God's having blessed them with a competency of the good things of this life, or placed them, according to human calculation, above the fear of want, ought surely to prove a strong motive with them to guard against an overweening solicitude about their outward estate, and against all such unbelieving fears in reference to it, as may have the effect of shutting up their bowels of kindness towards their poor brethren, and of withholding their hand from administering to the wants and necessities of others. Surely, if inordinate carefulness and distracting solicitude about temporal things, be sinful, and therefore hurtful, in the case of those who have little of this world's goods, and whose privations often are many, they must be still more sinful, and can be no less hurtful, in the case of such as are placed under more favourable outward circumstances, and upon whom there lies, in consequence, a weighty obligation to alleviate the privations of their poor brethren; and thus to prove the means of lessening the temptations by which these are often led to cherish a querulous spirit, to think hardly of the wise Disposer of their lot, and to entertain unbelieving fears and forebodings regarding the future.

The command of the Apostle, however, is exceeding broad, and extends, as we have already said, to all things. The disposition which it denounces, and which it seeks to repress and to destroy, is no less pernicious in spiritual than in temporal things. When the believer delivers himself up to distracting cares and perplexing fears in regard to the perfecting of that which concerns him spiritually, it is plain that he loses sight, for the time, of the suitableness, the sufficiency, and the completeness of that provision which has been made for his soul's necessities in the economy of grace, or that his faith in the Divine testimony regarding them is at the time weak and unsteady. True it is, indeed, that he is naturally sinful, that he is encompassed with infirmities, that he is ever liable to defile his soul with sin; but a fountain has been opened for sin and uncleanness, and a great propitiation has been made for guilt; and, therefore, instead of distracting himself about his sinfulness, he

ought at once, and continually, to look to Jesus, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and to place implicit trust in the efficacy of his atonement. In the fountain of Christ's blood the most polluted may wash and be clean; and he who, through his unbelieving fears, is led to distrust the efficacy of this blood to purge away the guilt of his sinfulness, only distracts his soul to his eternal undoing. Inward corruption and depravity, it is true, ever work in the hearts even of believing men, and often make them cleave to the dust. And of the existence and malignity of these principles of evil they cannot be too certainly assured; and for their mortification and destruction they cannot too earnestly labour; but, to be filled with an overweening anxiety about them, is to doubt the faithfulness of Him who has promised, that "he will turn again, and will have compassion upon us," that "he will subdue our iniquities," and that "he will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea;" who hath graciously said, "from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," and who, while he enjoins his people to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, encourages them by the gracious assurance, that it is "God which worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." True, the malice and power of Satan are great, and are ever exerted in opposition to the believer's spiritual advancement; for the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour; and most needful is it, therefore, that believers be not ignorant of his many devices; but why should they be anxiously careful, and filled with distracting fears about this, seeing he who is for them is greater and more powerful than all that are against them—seeing, he who encouraged the Apostle Peter by the gracious assurance, that he had prayed for him that his faith might not fail, intercedes, with an all-prevalent intercession, for them—and seeing, the promise has been given them, that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Manifest, it is true, are the temptations by which believers are assailed, as they journey through this world of sin and of misery. But why should their minds be distracted because of this? The gracious promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness," which sustained the Apostle Paul in the hour of his need, is still sure unto all that, like this Apostle, take refuge in prayer; and God, it is said, "is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The Divine promise and the Divine faithfulness being pledged to accomplish all the purposes of God regarding his people, and to perfect that which concerns them, they need not, and they ought not, to fear that he will ever forsake them, or that he will permit the enemy to triumph over them finally. God's dealings

with them now may be often trying to flesh and blood; the way by which he leads them through the world may oftentimes seem circuitous and toilsome, and the discipline with which he exercises them, and by which he trains them for himself, may sometimes be severe and protracted; but, knowing that he acts righteously, wisely, and graciously, in all that he does to them, and that nothing shall fail of all the good things which he hath purposed and promised regarding them, they may well dismiss all fears as to the safety of their souls, they may well encourage their hearts in God, and they may well rest satisfied that their divine Lord is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day.

But some one, perhaps, will allege, that such a view of the matter is altogether inconsistent with the divine requirements and commands in regard to holiness, and naturally tends to lead men to relax their efforts in regard to their advancement in the divine life. The injunction, "be careful for nothing," it is true, implies high privilege, and is eminently fitted to relieve the mind of the believer from all perplexing fear, and from all overweening anxiety, in reference both to the things which pertain to the body and to those which pertain to the soul; but, just because it implies high privilege, and thus brings relief to the distressed and anxious spirit, it is also most conducive to holiness both of the heart and of the life. Its power to bring consolation to the believer's soul is derived from the fact, that his salvation is bound up with, and secured by, the provisions of that covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. And, while it gives no countenance to what is sinful, it implies the most earnest desires and endeavours, on the part of believing men, after that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. For, being contrasted, and yet connected, with the exhortation, "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," it tends most effectually to withdraw the believer from all confidence in himself, and to constrain him to throw himself upon resources which are inexhaustible and divine. He is to "be careful for nothing;" yet, in every thing, he is to take refuge in prayer.

II. But this leads me to advert more particularly to the second branch of the subject before us, namely, that part of the apostolic admonition by which the Apostle seeks to check all presumptuous confidence on the part of believers, and to shut them up to the exercise of a simple and abiding dependence upon God, and to the prayerful use of those means of grace which God has appointed for the spiritual comfort and improvement of his people. "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." It is by attempting to render himself independent of God that the unregenerate man thinks to secure his greatness and happiness. The believer, on the contrary, who has been taught of God, perceives and feels that his true greatness and his supreme good consist in his being dependent upon God, in his living continually in the exercise of believing trust in him, and in his maintaining constant intercourse with him. And, therefore, he is desirous to make God at all times acquainted with his case, to consult him in regard to all his difficulties, and to spread out all his wants before him. With a holy confidence and boldness the believer betakes himself to a throne of grace, and pours into the ear of his heavenly Father all his complaints, and supplicates the bestowment of whatsoever he needs; and, encouraged by the gracious invitations and promises of God in his word, he makes his requests known unto God, and rests satisfied that God will keep his soul in peace. And therefore the Apostle, knowing that such was the privilege of believers, and that such was the conduct pursued by all of them that made conscience of realising this privilege, is solicitous that the believers to whom he wrote should avail themselves of it, and that they should use it both to the glory of God, and their soul's profit. God, he knew, is honoured when his people trust in him, and when they make their requests known unto him. Even believers, he was aware, are often sinfully and to their hurt straitened in their own souls. But they need never be straitened in God, and they ought never to permit themselves to be so, for his ear is ever open to listen to their cry, and his hand is ever full to supply their wants. He is pleased when his people are importunate with him for the bestowment of what they need. And hence the Apostle urges believers in the text to let their requests be made known unto God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving—to let their petitions be poured out before God, at all times and under all circumstances—to continue in prayer, and to abound in the same with thanksgiving.

"In every thing, by prayer and supplication." The expression may be regarded as denoting earnestness on the part of those who make requests unto God; as indicating sincerity in the petitions which they present at a throne of grace; as significant of the honesty of purpose which they cherish when they have recourse to God in prayer. Yet there is a difference in the terms here employed by the Apostle. The word translated "prayer," when placed in the opposition in which it here stands, more properly regards the petitions which are preferred for the bestowment of some good; while that which is translated "supplication," has more properly regard to the petitions which are preferred for the averting of some evil. Nor is it without good cause that the



Apostle, in the admonition of our text, enjoins and urges believers to let their requests be thus made known to God—to let their petitions have respect not only to the gifts and graces which they need, but to the sorrows and the trials which they wish to be removed or averted; for unless believers were privileged thus to make their requests known to God, their freedom of access to the throne of grace could not fully meet the necessities of their case. The blessings which every believer needs, and for which he is commanded to let his requests be made known to God by prayer, are too numerous, and bear too closely upon his spiritual and eternal welfare to admit of their being lost sight of, or of their being transiently noticed by any one who has his spiritual interests truly at heart. And the toils and difficulties with which he may be called to contend, as he journeys through the wilderness of life, are often of such a character as would render them altogether overwhelming, if he were not privileged to make them the subject of his supplications unto God, and to entertain the hope and the persuasion that God would either remove them, or give him support under them. The answer, indeed, which they obtain may not always be such as they may at first be led to expect or to hope for; but they shall be privileged, sooner or later, in their blessed experience, to know that the very circumstance of their casting all their care upon the Lord, “by prayer and supplication,” is itself most consoling and most encouraging. And they shall also find, that though an answer may not be vouchsafed them at the time, and in the manner they expected or wished, yet it shall come, in the way, and at the time which will prove most efficacious of good to their souls, and most illustrative of the glory of Him who is the Father of Lights, and from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. If no such privilege, indeed, were theirs, we might well wonder at the injunction of the Apostle, “be careful for nothing.” Had they no strength but their own to lean on in the hour of trial—could they look only to an arm of flesh for support amidst their spiritual conflicts—had they only the sympathies of man engaged in their behalf, and were they thrown upon the resources of human wisdom merely, for effecting their escape from the difficulties and the anxieties of their Christian race—they must of necessity be filled with distracting cares, and be overwhelmed with fears. But being privileged, in the hour of their trouble, to look to Omnipotence himself; and, amidst all their dangers, to shelter themselves under the Rock of Ages, they are rightly enjoined to be careful for nothing, but, in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make their requests known unto God—to go to their heavenly Father, with filial confidence, in every time of need, to acquaint him with all their difficulties, to tell him all their sorrows, to ask from

him the supply of what they need, and to entreat him, either to avert the evils which oppress them, or to enable them to bear the burden of their sorrows with fortitude and patience.

But to prayer and supplication they must add thanksgiving. When believers make known their requests unto God, either in regard to the blessings which they desire, or in regard to the calamities which they wish removed, thanksgivings ought to mingle with these requests. Prayer and supplication imply the dependence of the creature upon God. But they imply also a high privilege conferred upon the creature; inasmuch as they indicate the freedom of access unto God, and give good reason to hope that God will grant according to all the right petitions which are preferred. And, therefore, thanksgiving is due from the creature for the very privilege of access itself; and so often as this privilege is used, an act of thanksgiving ought to be performed. Nay, when we consider that every thing which we enjoy comes from God, and that in him we live and move and have our being, thanksgiving ought to constitute our daily and continued exercise. Every hour of our life we are reminded of the obligations under which the divine goodness lays us; and were our gratitude in any degree commensurate with the benefits which we receive at the hand of God, we would ever be giving utterance to the language of thankfulness. Prayer for the Divine blessing, and supplication for the averting of some impending evil, cannot be regarded as being performed in a right spirit, if at the same time we give not God thanks for the favours which we may have already received, or for those which we hope still to obtain. Our unthankfulness under such circumstances, especially shewing that our hearts are not right with God, and that we are not duly sensible of the Divine goodness, will vitiate our acts of supplication and of prayer, will hinder their ascending up to the throne of God, and will render them inefficacious of good to the soul. And, hence, the Apostle exhorts that in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, our requests should be made known unto God.

But is there no limitation, it may be asked, to the duty here demanded of us? Is thankfulness to be cherished by us amidst the evils of our lot, as well as amidst the mercies which we enjoy? Are we to give thanks not only for the blessings which we receive, but for the afflictions and sorrows which we are called to endure? Oh, yes! The injunction of our text is of a comprehensive nature. It extends to all things. "*In every thing* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." No circumstance, no event, no situation, is exempted from the application of this command. Nor is it in the words before us only that such a command is given. In his Epistle

to the Ephesians (v. 20), the Apostle Paul enjoins believers to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in another place (1 Thessal. v. 18), the same Apostle, while enjoining those whom he addressed to pray without ceasing, enjoins them at the same time in every thing to give thanks, assuring them that this was the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them. And the Psalmist says, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth." Nor is it strange that Scripture should speak thus explicitly in regard to this matter. For, independently of the reasonableness of the injunction, the experience of believers in every age has enabled them to declare that even under those circumstances of their lot which were most trying to flesh and blood, and which at first sight seemed to justify a querulous and a murmuring spirit, they discerned their greatest cause for thankfulness. Hence, David says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" and, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Moses chose rather to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Christ. Paul and Silas, when shut up in a loathsome dungeon, because of their testimony for Christ, "prayed" at the midnight hour, "and sang praises unto God."

Indeed, it appears evident that until believers have learned to cherish this spirit of thankfulness amidst the evils of their lot, they cannot be said to be truly and rightly exercised under them. If they do not, under even the most trying circumstances of their present state, see some cause at least of thankfulness to God, when they make known their requests unto him, it is plain that the discipline with which it pleases their heavenly Father to exercise them, and by which he seeks to wean them from their dependence upon earthly objects, and to prepare them for himself, is not producing its proper influence upon either their sentiments or their conduct. The lesson, it is true, may be difficult to learn. Flesh and blood may rebel against it. Our pride and self-righteousness may rise in opposition to the self-denying ordinance which it imposes. The comparisons, too, which we are so prone to make between ourselves and others may lead us to imagine that we do well to rebel against the hardships of our condition, and that we are at liberty to give utterance to the language of complaint, and that almost any means may be used for the purpose of extricating ourselves out of the difficulties with which we are called to contend. But, assuredly, when we give way to the influence of such a spirit, we are just setting ourselves in

opposition to the will of God regarding us,—we are denouncing those arrangements by which he consults for our welfare,—and we are hindering ourselves from the attainment of that good which he proposes to secure for us. God is too wise not to know what is most conducive to his people's welfare, and he is too powerful not to be able to accomplish his gracious purposes regarding them; and therefore they may confidently commit themselves unto God, as unto a faithful Creator, and rest satisfied that he will make all things work together for their spiritual and their everlasting good.

In every thing, then, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. In the season of prosperity, when the cup of worldly bliss is full, or runneth over, turn with grateful hearts to Him from whom all your mercies flow; and, while you bless him for the temporal benefits which he has bestowed, bless him more especially for the better benefits of his grace and salvation; and earnestly supplicate that, while he is causing you to taste of his goodness in respect of earthly comforts, you may be enabled to demean yourselves as it becomes the stewards of the grace of God, and may not be allowed to forget that there is a better and a more enduring portion than any which this world can bestow. In the time of adversity, of affliction, and of sorrow, when the hand of God lies heavy upon you, and manifold evils encompass you, remember the saying which is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and give thanks for the assurance which you have that it is for your profit that you are chastened of the Lord, and that, though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God, unto them that are exercised thereby; and pray God that you may not, through murmuring and unthankfulness, deprive yourselves of the benefit which sanctified afflictions procure, and thus add to the sorrow by which your spirit is distressed and weighed down. When assailed by manifold temptations, or when now for a season ye are in heaviness by reason of them, rejoice in the thought that God will not leave you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it, and that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. And even when you fall into sin, be thankful that you are not left to fall into all sin; and while you mourn over the guilt which you have thus contracted, and make application anew to the blood of sprinkling, and supplicate the turning away of the Divine anger, and the satisfying sense of

pardon and acceptance, and pray for the bestowment of grace sufficient for you, be grateful that you were not cut off in the very act of sinning, and that you did not die in your sins, and that space for repentance is still afforded you. In every thing let thanksgiving mingle with the making known of your requests to God.

But are there those among you who know nothing of prayer as a solace and a refuge amidst their difficulties and anxieties? Alas! theirs is truly a pitiable position. The afflictions of a righteous man, it is true, may be many, and his sorrows may be multiplied: but amidst them all he is privileged to take refuge in prayer; and in pouring out his complaints at a throne of grace, he can give thanks even for what he is called to bear, seeing he can discover in the trial the hand of a gracious God, and feels himself sustained and encouraged by the power and the grace of Him who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. But, ah! how different is the case with those who have not been taught to go to God with their petitions, and who are strangers to that filial confidence with which they, in whose breasts the principle of a true faith dwells, draw near unto God! Whatever comfort such may take to themselves amidst the evils of their lot, they are strangers to that consolation—the strongest and the most sustaining which they can now experience—even that which arises from a sense of the Divine favour, and from the possession of that hope which maketh not ashamed. Be concerned, then, that you may attain this knowledge, and that you may be found crying unto God for pardon and for peace, with the earnestness and the importunateness of those who have been made to feel their need and to see their danger as sinners, and to understand that, unless God in mercy stretch out his hand to save them, they must perish in their sins. And oh! forget not that if you are not effectually moved to the doing of this in this the day of your merciful visitation,—if you seek not the Lord now while he may be found, and if you call not upon him while he is near and beseeching you by all his mercies to turn unto him, and to accept of his freely offered salvation—not only may he refuse to hear in the day of your calamity, and to answer in that hour when your fear cometh, but your cry for help and deliverance may then die upon your lips, your heart may become as a stone within you, and the remembrance of your prayerless life will serve to deepen your despair, and to embitter the cup of sorrow which is given you to drink.

## SERMON XIV.

DUTY OF PRAYER FOR THE "PEACE OF JERUSALEM."

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(Preached at the opening of the General Assembly, 16th May 1844.)

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."—PSALM cxxii. 6.

JERUSALEM, as all know, was the capital of Judea, and the seat of God's solemnities. For it Jehovah had a particular respect: it was consecrated to his service; his name was hallowed there—his worship was maintained there—and its inhabitants were God's peculiar heritage. As the chosen city of the Most High, the city of their fathers, the Jews had, in every age, a particular veneration and attachment to it. But great though that city once was, and mighty though the Jews, as a people, once were, both the one and the other exist now only in melancholy ruins. Jerusalem's lofty towers have been levelled with the ground, and its walls trodden under foot of the Gentiles. From being a city compact and built together, defended by walls and battlements, the glory of the whole earth, it exists now only as a monument of Divine vengeance. Zion is a wilderness—Jerusalem a heap of ruins. And where are its inhabitants, these favourites of Heaven, these chosen people of God? They are scattered over the face of the whole globe, as the very outcasts of Heaven, the contempt and reproach of all men.

But do these words, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," convey no lesson of instruction to us, now that the city to which they originally referred exists but by name—now that the people who prayed for Jerusalem's defence, and Zion's prosperity, are scattered abroad as a by-word in every land? Do they convey no meaning to us—do they inculcate no duty upon us? Yes, for though God hath cast off his people for a time, and poured out upon them the vials of his indignation, yet he wills us to remember this his covenant people, to pray for their restoration, and that the veil may be taken from their hearts; and though, because of Israel's hardness of heart and profligacy of manners, God has levelled the palaces and towers of Jerusalem with the ground, and scat-

tered and peeled its inhabitants, yet he has still a Zion, a Jerusalem on the earth—he has still a Church and people in the world as dear to his heart as ever were the Church and people of Israel—a Church and people whom Christ has purchased with his own blood—whom he has rescued from the galling fetters of idolatry—with whom he has established his covenant—to whom he has made himself known as their covenant God. Such a Church and people are to be found in every clime. To a single tribe and nation he confines not his favour—to the land of Palestine, and the descendants of Abraham, he limits not his regards; but wherever he sounds his name, whithersoever he sends his gospel, wheresoever he calls sinners and makes them willing, there he has a spiritual Zion, of which he says, “this is my rest, here do I delight to dwell.”

We in this land form a part of the Church of the living God. Through the tender mercy of our God, the day spring from on high hath visited us—the oracles of truth have been committed to us—the kingdom of God has come to us—and the gospel of salvation has been published among us; and, contrasting our privileges, both sacred and civil, with those of any nation under Heaven, and by which, in divine sovereignty, we are distinguished, may we not legitimately be called a people near unto Him—the people of God? May not ours be termed the Zion—the Jerusalem of the living God—the place of God’s solemnities—the city of the great King? The rebellion, the defections that prevailed among the people of God of old, was no warrant for restraining this prayer, but, on the contrary, an argument for urging it with importunity; and our departure from God, as a nation, a people, a Church, and in all the sections of which that Church is composed, is no reason why we should not, but a strong motive for us to, cry mightily unto the Lord for Jerusalem’s peace, for Zion’s prosperity. Regarding it, then, as an imperative duty on the part of every Church, and every individual in the Church, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, let us turn our attention for a little to the words of the text, and endeavour to improve them by

*First*, Pointing out the duty, or wherein consists the duty, of praying for the peace of Jerusalem, and by adverting,

*Secondly*, To the encouragement that is here presented, “They shall prosper that love thee.”

Peace has a variety of significations in Scripture, which we shall not here particularly enquire into. But we may say, that it denotes harmony, prosperity, comfort, and happiness—the absence of all evil, and the enjoyment of all good. And as Jerusalem was not meant to designate exclusively the city known by that name, but the whole Jewish

state and polity, civil and ecclesiastical—did we listen to the admonition, and perform the duty inculcated to its full extent, we should not merely, in our intercessions, bear on our hearts before God the Church's prosperity, but the nation's weal. But as a nation can only advance in glory and prosperity, and hope to perpetuate these, just in as far as, and no farther than, it does, as a nation, seek the advancement of the Divine glory, and the promoting of the interests of pure and undefiled religion, (as that is the most absurd and mistaken policy in any man, or any body of men, that would lead them to separate religion and righteousness from a kingdom's temporal interests and welfare), we shall, I conceive, be consulting the nation's best interests, its safety, its stability, and peace, when we pray for the prosperity of Zion, when we pray for the peace of our spiritual Jerusalem. Being of this mind, I shall be justified in waving the remarks that might be made in reference to the peace and prosperity of the nation in a temporal point of view, and address myself specially to our spiritual circumstances, while I speak more in accordance with the position which I now hold, and the congregation which I have the honour to address. I conceive, therefore, that I shall not depart far from the import of the words of our text, or from the Psalmist's meaning, when he says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," if I urge prayer for the enlargement of the Church of Christ—for the revival of the power and spirit of religion in our own land—if we pray for the healing of divisions, and a speedy union among professing Christians, harmony among ourselves; and if we pray that ourselves and others may finally be brought to the enjoyment of the peace of the New Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above.

1. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem, implies praying for the enlargement of the Church of Christ. The spiritual Jerusalem is the Church of Christ, and the seeking her prosperity is the duty of all the subjects of the King of Zion. God has always had a visible Church from the dawn of creation, a generation that called upon the name of the Lord; but the daughter of Zion has often been left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. The kingdom of Satan has, alas, prospered in every age, while the Lord's people has appeared in the world like a small remnant. The inclosure of God's ancient people, when most extensive, was but like a little fold; the Christian Church for many years was of limited extent, and its adherents few in comparison. So much at variance is vital Christianity with the passions and prejudices of *sinful* men, with the craft and policy of *worldly* men, although it is designed and fitted to bless and exalt mankind universally, that the flock of Christ has been a little flock in *past* ages and that it has been preserved amidst all the opposition, and *rage*,



and persecution of its enemies, appears little less than a standing miracle. Even to this day, after a lapse of centuries, the flock of Christ is still a little flock. In surveying the globe, we find it is but a small proportion of our race that bear the Christian name. The proportion that baptized Christians bear to Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, scattered over this wide globe, is, according to computation, but as one-fifth; and of those Christians that belong to what is called the Churches of the Reformation, it is computed that they bear but the proportion of a third part to the Christian community: and then, oh! what a deduction must we make still, when we speak of the true Christian Church, of those who are the heart of the kingdom, in whose hearts the Redeemer holds undivided sway. There is, therefore, a powerful call on all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to strive and pray for the triumphs of the cross, for the extension of Christ's cause. My friends, the great Head of the Church has committed, in some measure, into the hands of his believing people, the interests of his kingdom—the diffusion of his religion. He does not look for success in their public exertions exclusively; for how shall they conquer the pride of human wisdom—how shall they pull down the temples of idolatry—how shall they burst asunder the shackles of superstition—how shall they overthrow the lengthened and long-maintained reign of ignorance, error, prejudice, corruption, and vice! That is impossible. But he calls upon them to be fellow-workers with Him in the glorious cause; to go forth in his name, and, relying on his strength, and animated with the spirit of faith and prayer, and girded with the armour of righteousness, he summons them to the conflict—he calls on them to fight the battles of the Lord. And oh! were their zeal, and their faith, and their love, proportioned to the magnitude of the work, and the goodness of the cause, and the encouragements they possess, under the banners of the Captain of Salvation, they should go forth conquering and to conquer—one should chase a thousand, and two should put ten thousand to flight. In the early ages of Christianity, the activity, the devotedness, and the prayerfulness of Christians, were essential to the evangelizing of the world, as needful in the Divine economy as the miracles that accompanied the preaching of the Apostles; and shall these be less necessary now that these supernatural gifts are withdrawn and have ceased—shall their duty be still imperative, and yet their faith fail, their zeal flag, their efforts become feeble, and their supplications faint—shall they relax, shall they intermit, now that Peter ceases to strengthen the brethren and to feed the flock, now that James and John are withdrawn from the field of labour and conflict, now that Paul and Barnabas have ceased to struggle and strive for the cause of Zion's King? Surely not. But it

may be asked, What can individual Christians do? What can they do? They can pray and cry aloud—they can plead the honour of Christ's name—they can remember God's covenant promises, and witness their fulfilment—they can bear in mind what God did in the generations of old, and pray that the arm of the Lord would awake and put on strength, and cause light to arise on the dreary waste. They can urge, with intensity, this prayer, "Let thy kingdom come." What Christian cannot do this, and what Christian, animated with love to Christ, and convinced of the value of the gospel, and the need of salvation to the perishing sinner, does not do this? But Christians can do more than this. The time once was, when from ignorance of what constituted duty, from the want of union and co-operation, and non-acquaintance with the measures needful for making inroads on Satan's territories, the Christian could do little more for Christ's cause than pray. When he surveyed the world—contemplated the boundless waste—cast his eye over the vast regions of the earth that were fast locked in the fetters of ignorance and vice—he might sigh and sympathise, he might shed the tear of pity, commingled with regret—he might ask, who shall go over to the rescue and deliverance of these men?—he might pray, Send help by the man whom thou wilt send; but what could he do more? But now circumstances are altered. Christians cannot merely unite together in prayer for Zion's prosperity, but they can combine in devising means, and they can co-operate in carrying out Scriptural measures, for bringing the truth nigh to a benighted world. Of late years a flame of Christian philanthropy has been kindled in many quarters; and nowhere has it burnt with more intensity and purity than in our own land, and among those of our own Church, which seeks the Christianizing of the whole world. Different measures have been devised and adopted, different associations have been organised and put into active operation, all having the same object in view—that of hastening on the fulfilment of the gracious promise and prediction, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow into it." And these efforts of Christian benevolence shall, we trust, continue to be made, and these prayers of faith shall not cease to ascend heavenward, till all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God. I cannot dwell longer on this point; but enough has been said to make it apparent that Christians in these days have it in their power to combine exertion with prayer, and by union and co-operation to turn their wishes and desires to some account, by engaging in some scheme of mercy, in some labour of love, in behalf of their fellow perishing sinners. Should there be an individual Christian who is inclined to limit his compassionate regards and exertions to the spiritually necessitous at home, although we

do not sympathise with his views, persuaded that real Christian charity is of too extensive a nature to be thus fettered and limited, and must of necessity, when truly enlightened, take a wider range; yet the views of such a one are very easily met. And while we bring before him the deplorable state of our own land, the ignorance and profligacy, the spiritual destitution and misery, the apathy and neglect of all that is sacred, by which thousands and tens of thousands in our densely peopled cities are characterised, we can remind him that there are Bible Societies, and Missionary Societies, and Sabbath School Societies, and Education Associations, and Church Building Associations, and Ministers' Support Associations—all spending their energies, and devoting their funds, and raising their prayers for the cause of Christ at home, for checking the progress of irreligion at our own doors, for bringing the means of spiritual instruction near to the perishing thousands among ourselves. And if such persons are sincere, if they will support the cause of Christ, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem, let them unite with and strenuously support those institutions which aim at promoting those Christian objects that are within their reach. And oh! if there is any love to the Saviour—any concern for perishing souls—any zeal for the cause of truth—any honesty of intention—any regard to consistency, they will, in some such way, come forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

2. In praying for the peace of Jerusalem, we pray for the revival of the power and spirit of vital religion in our land. This, my friends, should be the Christian's leading petition when he bears the circumstances of his fellow-sinners on his heart at a throne of grace. And why? Just because it is the foundation and spring of every Christian movement. Without vital godliness there can be no true zeal for God's honour and glory; without it there can be no firm, lasting bond of union, no hearty, steady co-operation—no real, desirable peace. But let vital godliness prevail—let personal religion animate us, and every gracious result will flow from it; the glory of the Lord will be in the midst of us, and a wall of fire will encircle us. Indeed, the Christian is not warranted to pray for temporal blessings for himself or for his country, but in connection with, or subordination to, those that are spiritual; and that man who seeks and prays for his country's spiritual and eternal weal, merits better of his country than the man who seeks and strives for her highest earthly glory and aggrandizement—aye, who is successful in securing it; for what, let me ask, is temporal weal to spiritual health—to eternal happiness? What is all earthly good compared with a renewed and sanctified heart? What is peace with man compared with peace with God? What is deliverance from human op-

pression compared with rescue from the galling yoke of sin? What is security from the wrath of man to deliverance from the wrath of God? A compassionate heart bleeds for the poverty, the bondage, the carnage of his fellow-creatures; but a sanctified heart, not neglectful of these, feels more deeply for their ignorance, their guilt, their depravity, and the fearful consequences flowing from them. And how can we hope for this result, either personally or generally, but by vital godliness possessing the heart, by the spirit of vital religion pervading the land? Every one who knows any thing of religion, knows that betwixt the form of godliness and its power there is an essential difference—that a nominal and real Christianity are two very different things—and it requires very little discernment to discover which of these predominate. But, alas, my friends, there is too little even of the form and the profession of religion in the day in which we live. The laxity of principle, and the looseness of manners that too generally prevail in all ranks, is fearful. “All have gone aside; all have corrupted their ways.” Grievous is the prevalence of irreligion, the contempt of God, the sensuality, and pride, and carnality, and earthliness that are chargeable on vast numbers of our community. Impiety and vice are not merely practised, but professed—not merely persisted in, but defended. Many of the higher ranks are too exalted to acknowledge and worship God their Maker—too much bent on carnal pleasure or amusement to acknowledge his goodness or praise his name—too indifferent about their souls to seek after Christ and his salvation. His house is by them deserted, his worship neglected, his servants disesteemed, with an effrontery that is most daring, a self-contradiction and inconsistency that is most criminal. They (some of them) set at nought those very laws they took part, it may be, in framing. In prodigality and luxury they wanton. Thousands and tens of thousands are squandered in ministering to their lusts and pleasures, while they have not a single mite to bestow in promoting the interests of religion, and little or nothing to spare for the advancement of any useful or benevolent design. And with what zeal does the lower portion of the community strive to emulate the higher in that which is the disgrace of both. Intemperance, impurity, profane cursing and swearing, Sabbath-breaking, despite of ordinances, breach of vows, are the dark features by which our country’s population are disfigured. Oh! is it to be wondered that private and public calamities should overtake us? In populous cities, where characters of every description congregate, and where “one sinner destroys much good,” these things were at one period only known; but, alas, in the peaceful retreats of rural life, where fewer temptations present themselves, where, one would think, every thing reminds us of and draws us to God, and invites to devotion, there is a similar forgetfulness of God,

a similar despite of his authority, and a similar hunting after the ways and the wages of unrighteousness. Let us take the Bible in our hands, and bring the hearts and the lives of men to the touchstone, and proceed through the length and breadth of our land, and how few shall we find, when laid in the balances, not fearfully wanting? Many, many have cast away from them the form of godliness, and many, many have nothing more to boast of but the form; and, where there is any zeal, is it not more, with many, about any thing rather than the work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and practical godliness? And even amidst God's professing people, and in those spots of the vineyard that are most carefully inclosed and tenderly watched over, what coldness, and deadness, and formality prevail! How little is there of the vitality and power of religion, of the fervour of devotion, of the tender and close walking with God, and of the fruit that appears, compared with that care and culture which God has bestowed. This every Christian man and every Christian minister feels, in the state of his own heart and the aspect of his own congregation. And the sad misfortune is, these things are marked, but they excite little comparative uneasiness, they awaken little heartfelt sorrow. Though convinced of this state of things, we feel not as we ought; though admonished, we are deaf to instruction; though we witness or feel such things, we lay not seriously to heart either what we are or what we ought to be. Like the natural man, "beholding our face in the glass, we go away and forget what manner of persons we are." Oh! let it be considered that the righteous are scarcely saved—oh! let us be persuaded that there is much cause for weeping and mourning—much cause for the priests, the ministers of the Lord—all the friends of the Redeemer—to go "weeping between the porch and the altar, and saying, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach." Have I given too dark, too gloomy a view of things? I fear that truth must bear witness, and that the Judgment Day will declare, that the picture is not overwrought, that it might have had even a deeper colouring, and yet proved a true delineation.

Does not this state of things call for deep humiliation and public confession of sin? Does it not urge powerfully on all to be seeking after a general reformation of manners? Does it not call for fervent supplication for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—for an universal revival of vital religion and godliness in the midst of us—that the Lord would strengthen the things that remain and seem ready to die—that amongst all ranks, and in every sphere, and in every corner of the land, God would arise, and plead his own cause, and advance the interests of his own kingdom. It loudly calls on the ministers of the Gospel, and those over whom they are placed in the Lord, to entreat that those who minister at the

altar may be animated with greater zeal for the honour of Christ's name—may be inspired with more ardent love for the souls of men, and with a deeper concern for their spiritual and eternal well-being. Does it not lead all to plead that the ministrations of the sanctuary may be accompanied with those earnest desires, that love of truth, that conviction of their importance, that are essential to their efficacy; that they may be attended and succeeded with that growth in grace and knowledge of Christ, that conformity to the Divine will and image, which are the pleasing evidence that they are rendered effectual means of salvation? Pray that God would revive his own work in the midst of us—that the great Head of the Church would pour out upon us all richly of his Divine influences—that they may be felt in all their enlightening, convincing, converting, sanctifying, comforting, and saving power. Pray that, in all corners of the land, the name of the Most High may be hallowed—that men of every rank and degree, of every station and office, may feel the solemnizing influence of Divine grace, and be brought under the power of the truth. Pray that God's servants may be clothed with salvation, and his people shout aloud for joy. It is through a change such as this—through an awakening and strengthening of the power of vital religion—by a returning to the Lord, from whom all have grievously revolted—that we can hope as a people and nation to prosper and be at peace.

While we speak thus of the existence, the prevalence, the wide-spread influence of impiety and vice, in all their various aspects, we do not mean to insinuate that religion has forsaken our land. No; we are persuaded that, while there is a sad degeneracy, a sad declension, on the part of multitudes, a sad short-coming on the part of all, there still exist among us much and sincere love for the name of God and the cause of Christ—much zeal for the interests of pure and undefiled religion. There exist many who are bewailing their own personal sins, and the sins of the Church, and the sins of the community—many who walk with God, and live under the influence of the powers of the world to come. In every congregation, in every district, however limited, God has his own hidden chosen ones, who have the white stone given to them, the seal of heaven stamped upon them—a seed to serve him; and I would gladly hope that the number of God's praying, serious, devout Christians is on the increase rather than on the decline. The Prince of Darkness is doubtless making great efforts, by his numerous legions, and in every possible way, to overthrow the authority and empire of Christ in the midst of us; but there still exists a little band, whose hearts the Lord has touched, who have maintained, and will continue to maintain, his cause amidst abounding iniquity—who, through God's grace, have maintained, and will maintain, their integrity; and who, through the guid-

ance, of the Captain of Salvation, can awe and paralyse, if they do not defeat, the hosts of rebels against the righteous King of Zion. Yes, there are thousands on thousands within this realm—thousands on thousands, blessed be God, within the limits of our own Church, and these some of high as well as mean name—who can appeal to the Searcher of hearts, and say, “Thou knowest that we love thee”—thousands who are seeking and panting for the living God, and who fail not by day or night to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. The Lord increase their number, and fan the fire of their zeal and devotion! And, my friends, I need scarcely say, happy is it for our land that it is so; for, remnant though they be comparatively—despised though they are by the undiscerning haughty sons of pride, they are the sinews, the heart’s blood of the nation—they are the stability of our throne, the strength of our kingdom—they are the props and pillars of our Zion—they are the salt that preserves the nation from putrefaction and decay. Now, it is our duty, the duty of all who know any thing and feel any thing of the power and vitality of religion, to strive, to plead, to cry incessantly for the increase of such a seed; and, for the attainment of this blessed result, let us cry mightily unto the Lord—let the throne of grace be plied incessantly and importunately for the revival of the spirit and power of religion in the hearts and lives of professing Christians. “Awake, awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old!”

3. In praying for the peace of Jerusalem, we pray, or should pray, for the healing of existing divisions among professing Christians—for a closer union amongst all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and for the maintenance of concord and harmony among ourselves. In this state of imperfection, it is not possible that men of the greatest sincerity, uprightness, and integrity—men of the greatest humility of heart and docility of spirit—should come to the same conclusions in almost any one matter. Not viewing objects in the same light, or through the same medium, and enjoying the privilege of proving all things, of inquiring, investigating, and judging for themselves, it cannot be expected but that differences of opinion should arise in regard to matters even of the last moment, and where unity of sentiment were most desirable. And I need not tell any one now hearing me, of the endless names by which the professed followers of Jesus have been distinguished. At a very early period of the Church, even before the death of the first apostles of the Lord, divisions had taken place among Christians. They chose their leaders, and they ranged themselves under their banner. One said, I am of Paul—another, I of Apollos—and a third, I of Cephas. It was not because the inspired heralds of the cross gave different views of divine things,

or entertained or published different sentiments, or uttered an uncertain or doubtful sound. They both believed and spake the same things, under the direction of the same Spirit, and as the Lord gave them utterance. But those to whom they published the gospel, giving way to carnal likings and dislikings, from regard to the man and his manners, rather than the matter he advanced,—like the disciples, and it might be in imitation of the disciples in the different schools of philosophy, they would follow this Christian guide and that, and be called after his name. Paul expressly told them that such divisions and party spirit indicated carnality of mind—any thing but a Christian spirit and temper. Nothing, however, has tended more to check the progress of genuine Christianity, tended more to excite the ridicule of the enemies of the truth, or operated more as a stumbling-block to the young, the weak, and the undesigning, than such divisions. When Christians all met with one accord and with one mind, numbers were daily added to the Church, and the flame that was kindled and burned among them was pure and hallowed, proceeding as it did from the altar of God. Blessed was that period when the Church was one fold, under one Shepherd, instead of being rent into a thousand parts, and split into divisions innumerable; but this happy union was soon broken, and the consequences were pernicious. When they began to range themselves under this and that leader and spiritual guide, an unhallowed flame was kindled, error began to be commingled with the pure water of life, and genuine Christianity halted in its progress. It has been well and truly said, “Then did the Christian Church cease to be *itself*, and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degenerated into insipid spiritless formality. When once it became contentious, it broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it.” From that day downwards the parties and sects among Christians have been increasing, and where one has died of old age or infirmity, sometimes two have sprung up from its ashes; and such and so numerous are the divisions and subdivisions in the Christian Church, that it is with difficulty they can be reckoned up; and these divisions exist chiefly among Protestants, of which Roman Catholics make a vain boast. Many of the differences amongst those taking the Christian name are grounded on most important and vital points, but many of them are such as originate in matters of minor consideration. Through partiality and early prepossession, and in some instances through prejudice and pride, have the grounds of original division been magnified to objects of immense bulk; and, with a minuteness of discrimination peculiar to themselves, have they marked and pointed out shades of difference that are obvious to few eyes but their own. It is to be lamented that those that hold by the same great Head



—who are of the same faith, and hope, and baptism—who preach and hear the same glorious and gracious truths—should, notwithstanding, be so far disjoined from each other as they really are; and that, in this our fatherland especially, those who are most nearly allied to each other in principle, should be farthest removed from each other in brotherly love. How lamentable, how distressing is this to a serious mind! and is it not evident that it is a becoming subject of supplication at a throne of grace on the part of those who are required to pray for the peace of Jerusalem? Oh, the friends of the Redeemer should beware, lest, while they are striving to maintain and uphold this adminicle and that of the Christian fabric, the grand fabric itself be not lost sight of—lest they forget to strive earnestly, and contend unitedly, against the common enemies of the truth and the God of truth for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let us, my friends, entreat that Christians may all be brought back to their first love—that the unhappy divisions in the Christian world may speedily be healed—that Ephraim may no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim—that the grand centre of union may be Christ crucified, Christ exalted, the alone foundation of a sinner's hope, the alone source of a Christian's comfort—that Christians may no longer be ranked in parties, or marshalled under party names, but that the great and only strife may be who shall love the Redeemer with greatest intensity of affection, who shall serve him with the greatest zeal, who shall be most forward in checking the progress of impiety and vice, who most influential in advancing Christian purity, and strengthening the bonds of brotherly love.

But observe, my friends, while I plead for peace, I seek it not at the expense of truth—I seek for no compromise of principle—no sacrifice of the dictates of enlightened conscience; I seek not the peace of the Church by breaking our peace with God and our own consciences; I seek for no indiscriminate union with all who take to themselves the Christian name. There are those who assume the Christian name, when many of their sentiments and professed doctrines are, in my apprehension, as far removed from vital Christianity, from the Christianity of the Bible, as the east is distant from the west. Many there are, who, though they may maintain some of the precious truths of the Gospel, yet neutralise them by pernicious admixtures—many who, though they may preach Christ crucified, and press the acceptance of him for salvation, yet cannot, from the principles they have espoused, exhibit Christ in all the riches of his grace—in all the sovereignty of his dominion and authority. To coalesce with such individuals, to exhibit no line of separation from such individuals, would be a trifling with principle, a virtual declaration that truth could not easily be discovered, that it was difficult to say where or

with whom it lay, and that all creeds were alike—would be a relinquishment of that faith that was originally delivered to the saints, in defence of which the primitive martyrs bled, and to maintain which our forefathers struggled even unto the death. Such a union would form a most unholy coalition—a most unnatural commixture of iron and clay—in which no cordial, beneficial co-operation could ever take place, and on which the blessing of God could neither be sought nor expected. This would be a union with those who, in the day of trial (as has been repeatedly seen and felt), would assuredly turn round and hand us over to the will and tender mercies of our deadliest enemies, as Judas did his Lord. A union such as this we would deprecate. From a union such as this we would pray God ever to be delivered, as leading to consequences the most painful, to results the most ruinous to the interests of genuine religion. Purity must ever be coupled with peace; purity must precede peace. While God commands to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, this, also, is Heaven's injunction and caveat against every unhallowed yoking together, "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, saith the Lord." When we speak of union, we speak of union in so far at least as Christian co-operation and combination against the common foe of Christ and Christianity are concerned, with all those who hold the great Head, who cling to the momentous truths of the everlasting Gospel, and are determined not to let them go or be invaded. The time was when such a coalition was confidently contemplated—when Protestant Christians, of different name, were forgetting their former animosities, and drawing nearer and more closely to each other—when they prayed together and acted in unity for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom; and it was hailed as a blessed omen and presage of a closer and more intimate union and communion. But these promising symptoms were, in the providence of God, blasted—a deadly blight withered those buds from which precious fruit was anticipated. One is almost ready to suppose that Satan trembled for his own dominion in the existence of such harmony, and was permitted to send forth the demon of discord to scatter among the friends of evangelical truth the seeds of dissension, and to rupture that bond which he could not look upon with complacency. But circumstances have occurred which will tend to bring, and which are actually bringing, those who love the Lord Jesus Christ into closer contact.

But though Satan has effected his purpose so far, by dis severing those who ought to have been banded together against the common foe, against error and corruption in every form, he has (although he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, but it was in his heart to destroy)—he has, by his machinations, aroused the energies of our own Church specially,

and brought her friends into closer compact, and union, and co-operation. Prior to the painful disruption that took place twelve months ago, a deep concern had been awakened for the perishing thousands of our brethren at home, who were living without priest, or altar, or sanctuary—who were living, and allowed to live and die, in heathen ignorance; and a flame has been kindled for the advancement of the interests of religion, such, and so intense, as past ages never witnessed—which holy zeal has burnt with a purer and stronger flame, notwithstanding all the attempts to quench it, in the apathy of nominal friends, in the rancour of bitter foes, since we quitted the Church of the Establishment. And we trust the efforts of the friends of the Redeemer will not be relaxed—that the war against ignorance, and error, and vice, will not cease to be carried on—till every destitute, dreary, neglected spot in our land, whether in the crowded lane or the sequestered glen, has its sanctuary and its minister, its school and its teacher, where young and old together shall be taught the wonderful works of God. Aye, looking far beyond the limits and the necessities of our own native land, the followers of Christ will not cease to labour and pray, till they hear the triumphant shout raised, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. It is for bringing about this blessedly glorious result that we long for union and co-operation among all the disciples of Christ. Doubtless, then, it is our duty to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, that in God's good time, and by means which he will dictate and bless, Christian harmony may be restored, the spirit of brotherly love may be diffused and perpetuated among all who love the Saviour—that Christians may be found under no other head but Christ, and animated with no other temper but his, which was meekness and holiness and love. And we should pray unceasingly—fervently pray—for peace and harmony among ourselves. This I conceive to be essential, not merely to our comfort but to our prosperity, our stability, our very existence as a Church. It is what our enemies, whether concealed or avowed, do most dread, for it is well known that such as are united in Christian principle, and bound together by Christian brotherly affection, are invincible, and terrible as an army with banners; and a cause that is maintained by such men, and founded on such principles, is not easily overthrown; and fain would they flatter themselves that we shall get disaffected with each other, and fall out by the way—that we shall get disunited, and, being disjointed, shall fall in pieces. Their prognostications will, I trust in God, be falsified, and their hopes and anticipations completely disappointed—that, as a Church, we shall remain compact—that, as Christian brethren, we shall continue united and knit together in love. And if we are brought under the guidance of the Spirit of God—if we draw largely of vital in-

fluence from our living Head—if the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keep our own hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, it will go far to preserve this concord and unity amongst the members of Christ's body. I am not so enthusiastic as to suppose but difference of opinion must exist in such a large body as ours in many things. The members of the purest and the most limited society cannot, in our present imperfect state, think all alike; nor am I an advocate for the quashing of all free discussion, and the fair, honest, and manly declaration and interchange of men's sentiments, and views, and opinions. This I conceive to be essential to the eliciting of truth, and to the establishing of truth—aye, it is essential, if conducted in a Christian spirit, to the settling of amity and concord on a firm and substantial basis. Even private friendships are strengthened by mutual explanations, and often cemented by friendly remonstrance and plain dealing. And if there are not, which I trust there are not, spirits amongst us, who, like certain animals, cannot live but in troubled waters—and self-conceited spirits, who think every thing wrong that does not originate with themselves and exactly harmonize with their own views—and proud spirits, who must have all to bend to their dicta—and if all prejudice and jealousy cease, and if mutual forbearance is exercised, and mutual confidence begotten, and charity, that thinketh no evil, is cherished—and, combined with these, there be a consciousness on the part of every one of us of his own ignorance and liableness to mistake—and united and fervent prayer for Divine light and direction—there will be, there cannot fail to be there, harmony and peace.

Our circumstances are now, as a Church and as the courts of a Church, widely different from what they were in times not long gone by. Then we met as men of very different views and sentiments, though we had subscribed the same standards, and sworn allegiance to the same Master. Our subjects of discussion were not merely matters of ecclesiastical polity, and points of church discipline; but they often had respect to the vital doctrines of the Gospel, the characters of the heralds of salvation, and the functions of the sacred ministry, respecting which there were often the most discordant opinions, where nothing but one sentiment ought to have prevailed. But now the great causes of contention and division are removed—we meet together as brethren, wearing the same badge and uttering the same shibboleth—who have, in the face of the world and before God, as one man, lifted up a testimony against error, and, as with one hand, subscribed a declaration in favour of truth; and in all our assemblies, whether of greater or minor name, we meet for the maintenance of the principles which we have avouched, and carrying out the great objects for which a Church of Christ was instituted—the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the promoting of vital godliness. O, I

trust the unseemly spectacle will never be witnessed in our Free Church courts, of two antagonist bands placed against each other in martial array, but that we shall meet together as brethren of the same family, the followers of the meek and lowly Redeemer, to consult for the glory of our great Head, to seek the purity and prosperity of our Zion, and, by our counsels, and deliberations, and prayers, to strengthen each other's hands in our work of awful and everlasting importance.

4. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem includes praying that ourselves and others may be brought to the enjoyment of the peace of the New Jerusalem. There is a Jerusalem above of which the earthly is typical—a heavenly Canaan to which the earthly points. While we pray for the means, we surely cannot but pray for the end—while we entreat for preparation, we cannot but long for possession. Is there a soul that does not pant for the enjoyment of God in a better world, where peace and harmony, where purity and bliss, shall universally, and uninterruptedly, and eternally reign? The more we are agitated by wars and rumours of wars—the more we see of the jealousies of princes and the struggles of rival kingdoms—the more we witness the contentions of rulers and the schemes of state politicians—the more we contemplate, and are brought into contact with, the disputes and divisions of professing Christians—the more eagerly must every one who does not rejoice in envy, and turmoil, and strife, long for the serenity and peace of that country where there is no discord nor jealousy, no envy nor contention, nothing to hurt or destroy—where, though the tongues are ten thousand, there is but one heart, one purpose, one song. Does not thy prayer, then, O Christian, this day arise—shall it not continue to ascend heavenward, not only in thy own behalf, but in behalf of thy Christian brethren of every name—in behalf of Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Gentiles, Mahomedans and Indians, bond and free—in behalf of friends and enemies, that they may be all one in Christ—that He may be all in all to them, and that they, with you, may, through the blood of atonement and the purifying influences of the Spirit of God, be prepared for, and brought to, the possession of the land of light, and purity, and peace, and joy? Who is there that does not exult in this blessed prospect, and who does not pray for its consummation? Arise, then, Lord, and have mercy upon Zion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

I cannot enter on the second head—the Encouragement. These words I have brought before you, at this time, that we may, one and all of us, be stirred up to yield compliance with the important duty contained in the text. And, surely, reverend fathers and brethren, this is a subject that ought to come powerfully home to us. Zion's glory—Jerusalem's peace

—the honour of our Lord—the prosperity of our Church—must doubtless be subjects of deep interest to our hearts, and, if so, we will spread them out before God. While this is the duty of every Christian, it is ours to go in the advance. We are recognised as men of God—as men of prayer—as intercessors with God for our people—the heralds of salvation—the messengers of the Lord of Hosts. It is our honour and our privilege, however unworthy, to lead the devotions of our people, and to go before them in every hallowed exercise and duty. While we urge them and stir them up to prayer, let us set them the example ; and, surely, ‘there never was a time when the duty was more imperative, whether we look to the past, contemplate the present, or venture to lift up the veil and cast a glance into the future—whether we are solemnized and, it may be, alarmed by the aspect of things that is frowning, or cheered by the prospect that is bright and hopeful. The glorious high throne has been, from the beginning, the sanctuary of God’s people—thither let us betake ourselves ; the chambers of the everlasting covenant have ever been the place of security to which they have fled—thither let us run and hide ourselves, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” Imitate the prophet’s purpose when he says, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”—AMEN.

## SERMON XV.

THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST MORE PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS THAN  
THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JAMES BANNERMAN, ORMISTON.

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but, if I depart, I will send him unto you."—JOHN xvi.7.

THESE words form part of the last discourse which our Saviour held with his disciples before his crucifixion, and were designed to comfort their hearts under the sorrow and painful surprise experienced by them at the near prospect of his death. Oftentimes, on former occasions, he had warned them of the approach of that hour when the Son of Man was to be taken, by the hand of violence, from the midst of them; he had talked, in no ambiguous language, of a baptism with which it behoved him to be baptized—a baptism, not with water, but with blood; and he had laboured, long and earnestly, to raise their thoughts to the anticipation of that season when the Shepherd was to be smitten, and the sheep scattered abroad. But, notwithstanding all such warnings, the announcement, on the occasion when our text was spoken, of his speedy removal from them, by means of a violent death, was, to them, a most unexpected and painful one. Up to the very moment when their Divine Master stood on the brink of betrayal and death, they had been slow of heart to believe, what he had often foretold, of his sufferings and cross; and their spirits were now overwhelmed with sudden astonishment and dismay at the tidings of the unlooked for and calamitous abandonment, which so nearly threatened them. It was in order to uphold their hearts, weighed down under the thought of this painful bereavement, that our Saviour addressed to his few, and, as yet, faithful followers, the language before us. He set before their eyes the new and better hopes they were to enjoy in consequence of his death, and assured them that, so far from his departure proving to them the beginning of sorrow, and consigning them to a state of utter desolation and despair, it was a matter, not for regret, but rather for rejoicing, inasmuch as it would turn out immediately subservient to their most important interest, and be the means of introducing them to a condition of higher and more enlarged privileges.

than any they had hitherto experienced. He tells them, that manifold and exalted as the advantages were which they had already enjoyed, in consequence of their long and familiar intercourse with the Son of God manifested in the flesh, yet that these advantages would be enhanced, in an unspeakable measure, through means of his approaching death and speedy departure from the midst of them—that the place in their living society, left vacant by his removal, was to be supplied by the Comforter, who was to come in his stead, and would abide with them for ever, and that the loss of his bodily presence, and personal fellowship with them, would be richly made up, and compensated for, by the coming and the power and the communion of the Holy Ghost. “It is expedient for you,”—such were the words of comfort addressed by the Saviour, on the eve of his death, to his mourning disciples—“it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but, if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

The great truth, then, which is involved in the language of our text is this, that the visible habitation of the Son of God, in the midst of his people, on this earth, when it should terminate, was to be succeeded by the invisible, but not less real, habitation with them of the Holy Ghost—that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, being no longer manifested to the eyes of men in the flesh, his place was to be taken and his departure supplied by the coming unto them of the Third Person of the Godhead, even the Eternal Spirit—that he, the Comforter, was to make his abode with them for ever, and that his residence with believers in this world was to prove so glorious in its character, and so blessed in its fruits, as more than to compensate for the loss of Christ's bodily presence to his people and his Church. It was necessary, according to many declarations of Scripture, and in order to complete that work which he undertook as Mediator, that the Son of God should leave this world and go to the Father. But, more than that, it was expedient also that he should go away, not that he might thereby leave his followers alone and forsaken in the world, but, on the contrary, that he might send down to his people the everlasting Spirit from the Father, whose habitation and fellowship with them should be so intimate, and familiar, and blessed, as to leave no room for mourning or regret on the part of those men who had been deprived of the living society and personal presence of the Son of God dwelling with them in the flesh.

Viewing, then, deliberately, the very impressive and remarkable doctrine thus unfolded to us, there cannot, I think, be any declaration better calculated to enlarge our understanding of that blessed office which the Spirit of God sustains, in regard to believers, or to exalt our notions of the privilege they possess in the experience of his presence and fellowship



with them. It is a common feeling on the part of many a Christian now, to look back with fond regret on the days when the Son of God dwelt personally with his people on the earth, and to covet the privilege of apostles and apostolic men, to whom was vouchsafed the wonderful distinction of enjoying the living presence, and conversation, and familiar acquaintance, of the Saviour of the world; but such a feeling has its origin in a most unworthy and imperfect view of the richness of those privileges promised to the people of God in Scripture, and actually enjoyed by every true believer at the present hour. It was expedient that the Lord Jesus Christ should go away—it was beneficial even to the interests of those who, in consequence of his departure, suffered the loss of his bodily presence and living society among them, inasmuch as his place was to be supplied, in a manner more excellent still, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in the hearts of his people, and inasmuch as believers were thereby to be made partakers of privileges more glorious far than any that could have been experienced by them even from the abiding presence—had such a thing been possible—of the Son of God in the flesh before the eyes of every generation of his Church. The presence of God the Holy Ghost dwelling in the hearts of believers, and revealed to their inward sight, is better much than even the presence of God the Son dwelling in the human nature of Christ Jesus, and revealed to the bodily eyes of his people. And since this marvellous inhabitation of the Holy Ghost in the souls of Christian men was, according to the terms of the Covenant of Grace, made to depend on the death and departure from this world of the Son of God, it was doubtless better that he should go away, in order that he might make room for the coming of the Spirit, as the source of higher blessings to his people, and the instrument of advancing unspeakably their spiritual privileges. I do not mean by this to say that the privilege of apostles and of men who had conversed with Jesus, and whose eyes had seen the Lord in the flesh, was not one to be counted precious. But the declaration of Scripture seems to warrant me in saying, that the privilege of believers, in the present day, who have God the Holy Ghost dwelling in their hearts, is one more precious still; and I know not any thing better fitted to enlarge our notions of the nature and extent of that privilege, than when we are informed, in the language before us, that, in order to the attainment of it by his people, it was expedient even that the Lord Jesus, Christ should depart from them; and that better far than even the glorious distinction which apostles enjoyed—better than even the living presence, and the endearing fellowship, and the gracious accents of Him who was truly God manifest in the flesh—was to be the indwelling in the souls of believers of the Holy Ghost. “It is expedient for you”—such was the declaration of the Saviour himself on this point

—"it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but, if I depart, I will send him unto you."

The words before us, then, naturally direct our thoughts to the superior advantages to be enjoyed from the coming and presence of the Holy Ghost, compared with those experienced in the presence with his people of the Lord Jesus Christ. In illustration of this point, therefore, let us fix our thoughts, in the first place, on the simple fact of the residence of God the Spirit in the souls of believers. That this great privilege was promised as the peculiar portion of God's people, is manifest from the words of our Saviour in the text, as well as from various other declarations contained in the inspired volume. The miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the assembled multitude of the disciples on the day of Pentecost bore witness in a public manner to the fulfilment of the promise—and the marvellous enlargement of the hearts, and understandings, and faith of the first followers of Jesus, subsequently to the exaltation of the Redeemer, and the descent of the Spirit upon the Church, sufficiently demonstrated the power and extent of his agency. Nor are we to suppose that, although thus commencing amid signs and wonders, and accompanied by an extraordinary outpouring of Divine gifts, the ministry of the Spirit was to terminate with the first disciples of the gospel, or with the short season of miracle and inspiration. When the Holy Spirit, under the title of the Comforter, was promised by our Lord to his people, it was expressly declared that "He should abide with them for ever." Throughout the pages of Scripture he is uniformly represented as the only principle of holiness, the only source of peace and joy and life in the heart of a converted sinner; and in most emphatic language—which cannot be misinterpreted or misunderstood—the Apostle Paul on various occasions reminds individual believers whom he addressed, that they were "the temples," "the residence," "the habitation" of the Spirit of God. Comparing, then, these passages with the statement of the text, we cannot doubt that the promise of the Spirit was to be understood as of a permanent privilege and blessing to be guaranteed to the followers of Christ in all ages; that the living presence of the Saviour being withdrawn from his Church, the presence of the Holy Ghost was to be vouchsafed as a substitute for it; and that believers, instead of being taught to connect the manifestation of God upon the earth with the residence among them of the Lord Jesus Christ, were to look for that manifestation within their own bosoms, and in the temple of their own hearts.

And who is there that ponders for a little the exceeding rich and precious character of the promise thus made to believers in all periods of the Christian

Church, that can fail to perceive the superiority of the advantages enjoyed by them over any that could have been derived from a personal acquaintance and fellowship with the Son of God, while he dwelt upon the earth? The Apostles and first disciples of Christ, who enjoyed that advantage, did indeed possess a marvellous privilege, in being admitted to the immediate presence and the acquaintance and the endearing fellowship of Him who was truly God manifested in the flesh—and theirs was a high and most solemn honour, when day after day they were permitted to make a near approach unto, and to hold intimate intercourse and to speak face to face with, that Being in whom there dwelt the fulness of the everlasting Godhead, without the intervention of any other veil between them and Him than the veil of mortal flesh, in which for a time he made his habitation. This was a glorious privilege—for it was nothing short of the privilege given to them to look upon God with their bodily eyes, and to behold his glory, and to live daily in his presence, as he dwelt for a season in the human form and mortal nature of Christ Jesus. But the presence of God the Spirit vouchsafed to believers in every age is a privilege more glorious still. This is to have God revealed, not before our bodily eyes, but in the dwelling place of our own hearts—it is to have the Most High residing not in the fleshly manifestation of Christ Jesus, but in the living habitation of every believer's soul—it is to have the Divine nature allied to and associated with, not the human soul and human body of the Son of God, but our own spirits and persons individually; it is for every real Christian to have God making his habitation within him, and to be constituted in a certain sense himself the residence of the Godhead.

Amid all the different manifestations which, in the history of the Church, God has been pleased to give of himself, this last is the noblest and richest in privilege by far. During the days of the Old Testament saints, they were taught to associate the idea of God's presence with a pillar of cloud or of fire, and more particularly with that symbol of material glory which dwelt so long between the cherubim in the temple at Jerusalem. When that temple was about to be destroyed, and the Saviour appeared among men, they learned to recognise the presence of God, not at Jerusalem, nor in the temple, but in the living manifestation given of the Divine nature before their eyes in the human form and person of Jesus Christ. And lastly, when the Saviour himself was withdrawn from the sight of his people, they were taught to acknowledge God as present, not in one particular place, nor associated with any one man, but as present in his body the Church—and in the consecrated temple of every believer's spirit. And who is there that does not see that this last manifestation of himself by his Spirit in the

heart of every Christian man, is the noblest and most glorious by far? The Most High does not now interpose any cloud of fire, or any veil of mortal flesh, between himself and the souls of his people. The presence of God is not now manifested through the medium of any material symbol, nor separated from us under the hiding and concealment of a human form. But in marvellous condescension, the Most High joins himself directly to the soul of each true believer, and makes his abode there; the Spirit of God is present in such a measure to the spirit of every real Christian, as that He may be said to be *within it*; and without the intervention or separation of human flesh, God now dwells immediately with each individual of his people as in his peculiar habitation. Unlike to the saints and righteous men of the Old Testament Church, we have not now to go up to God, dwelling in his temple at Jerusalem, and to worship at a distance before him—unlike to the disciples of the Saviour's day, we have not now to make our approach unto God dwelling in the human flesh of Christ Jesus, and to bow down before his feet, as our Lord. But it is our solemn, our fearful privilege to know that God has now come to us and tabernacles within us—that He has mysteriously joined himself to our souls, and that his *Spirit* is very near to our spirits, and that our living souls within us are the secret dwelling-place of his presence and his Godhead. This is the peculiar and glorious distinction vouchsafed to the believer unto whom the Holy Ghost has been given—and this is the privilege for the attainment of which it was better even that the Son of God should depart. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

But, in the second place, let us advert to the privilege enjoyed by the people of God, in consequence, not only of the presence, but also of the active operation of the Holy Spirit within their hearts; and here, too, we shall see how it was better in order that believers might obtain that privilege that the Son of God should depart from them. The high and extraordinary distinction conferred on the people of Christ in being constituted individually the residence of God by his Spirit, is not the only ground on which it may be affirmed that they have no reason to covet the privilege of the first disciples, whose eyes beheld the Lord in the flesh. It is testified in Scripture, in regard to the condition of every real Christian, that God by his Spirit not only dwells in him, but works in him, with a view to carry forward and complete the regeneration of his moral nature. The presence of the Holy Ghost within him is an active principle, influencing and affecting his whole spiritual frame; so that the believer is not only constituted a living habitation for the Most High to abide in, but is made throughout all the faculties of his understanding

and the feelings of his heart, the immediate subject of the operation of a Divine and Almighty power. It is to the agency of this power that the Scriptures uniformly ascribe both the conversion of sinners at first, and every step that they afterwards advance in the progressive sanctification and perfecting of their natures; and if they are enabled at length to work out successfully their own salvation, the reason is, that it is God himself who worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is the office of the Spirit, in regard to the people of God, to convince them of sin, to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto the heart—to sanctify them in soul and body and spirit—to constitute them, in short, new creatures—to give them access unto God, through Christ—to make intercession within them in prayer, and to help their infirmities—to seal them unto the day of redemption—and, finally, to quicken their mortal bodies from the sleep of death, and to raise them up unto life everlasting.

And is it not obvious to every one who reflects for a little on such an office, that the privilege possessed by the first disciples, who beheld the power of God manifested in the flesh, and were eye-witnesses of the signs and wonders which he did, is not once to be put in comparison with the privilege which believers now enjoy in being themselves the subjects of that power exercised in their souls by his Spirit? The conversion of an immortal soul from the power of Satan unto God—the moral regeneration of a sinner, and the turning of his alienated affections from a state of enmity to a state of reconciliation with his Maker—the renewal and sanctification of all the natural feelings, and principles, and propensities of a depraved heart—that is a work accomplished, in regard to each believer, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God operating immediately on his soul; and it is a work unspeakably more lofty in its character, and more glorious in its results, than any of the signs, and wonders, and miracles, of almighty power, which Jesus did when he manifested forth his glory and his disciples believed on him. For a man to feel that he has undergone such a change in his own nature—to feel that his soul was once dead in sin, but has now been made alive unto God in Jesus Christ—to feel that his eyes were once blind to all that is attractive in the character of God and in the love of a Saviour, but that now they have been opened and made to see a great sight—to *feel this* is to be conscious that the Spirit of the Most High is sojourning within him, and doing his mighty work upon the soul—a work that will appear more wondrous far in his sight, and more fraught with power and glory, than if he had stood by the side of the Son of God when he gave life to Lazarus in the grave, or when he poured light upon the eyes of the man that was born blind.

It is, then, a great mistake; and, more than that, it is a most un-

worthy view of the present privileges of believers, that leads men to mourn the absence of a living Saviour, and that tempts many a one to look back with fond and misplaced regret on the days of miracle and manifestation—days when God dwelt in the flesh before the eyes of his people, and made known his presence by signs and wonders before them. It was better that these days should come to an end, and that the Church of Christ should be introduced to the enjoyment of privileges better and loftier in their character than these. It was expedient that the Son of God should go away, and that the place among his people, left vacant by his removal, should be occupied by the Eternal Spirit, descending, not in fire nor in miracle, as of old, but descending into every awakened heart in the living and life-giving power of his grace. The sinner who has been made the subject of such a mighty and quickening energy in his own person—who has been born again, not by the operation of man, but by the will of God; and who, in looking back over the wondrous works of his spiritual history, is conscious that each one of them is the doing of the Lord, will not desire to search any where else but into his own heart for the proofs of the presence and the power of the Godhead. These proofs will be manifest in the most direct, and at the same time the most expressive, of all forms to his mind, when he ponders over and recounts the glorious things which God has done for his soul; and instead of being tempted to look abroad and to say, “Lo, he is here, or lo, he is there,” he will feel, in the holy awe and reverence of his heart, that the presence of God is within him. The Christian can require no words from me to remind him that, in his use and employment of Christian ordinances, he is more especially seeking to enjoy of this presence, and to hold intercourse with his God—that when he engages in these exercises, he is bringing his soul into immediate contact with the Almighty Spirit, and placing himself, as it were, under a divine influence; and that his observance of prayer, and preaching, and reading of the Word, must be poor indeed if he does not practically recognise the Holy Ghost as present in these exercises, and himself dispensing their saving virtue. And if, in the devout use of such appointed means, you have ever felt the spiritual support, and encouragement, and quickening which they are fitted to communicate—if, through such channels, the Spirit of God has ever imparted life, and peace, and hope unto your souls, that were ready to perish—if you can look back upon your past experience from the moment that you were first turned from darkness unto light, and estimate all the darkness in regard to divine things which required to be removed, and all the enmity that had to be counteracted, and all the resistance to God which has been overcome—then, in such a retrospect, you will be led humbly and gratefully to acknowledge that it is the doing of the Lord and won-

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drous in your eyes ; and you will be enabled to look back without regret on days when men sought after a sign, and yet failed to recognise the Lord who wrought it. The dispensation of the Spirit is a yet more glorious dispensation for the Church than that in which a living Saviour dwelt personally among his people ; and the operation of the Spirit in the renewal, and quickening, and sanctification of every believer's soul, constitutes **that** soul the residence of a mightier power and of holier wonders than ever were manifested to the outward senses. It is then a truth to which every real Christian, who has reflected as he ought to reflect on the saving and sanctifying work of the Spirit in his own heart, will readily bear testimony, that it was better for the Church and people of Christ that the Son of God should go away, and that the wonders which he wrought before the outward eyes of men should be succeeded by the mightier wonders of Divine power now wrought by the Spirit in the souls and consciences of all who believe. "It is expedient for you"—such were the words of the Son of God—"it is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I go away I will send him unto you."

It is thus that we are prepared in some measure to understand the nature and extent of that privilege enjoyed by the people of Christ in being constituted individually the residence of God by his Spirit, and in being made the immediate subjects of a Divine and Almighty power working in them. But let Christians never be unmindful of the awful as well as gracious character of the dispensation under which they live—a dispensation which teaches them to believe, not so much that they live continually under the eye and in the presence of God, as that God himself has come unto them and abides within them. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, addressing his Corinthian converts, "know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." It is no doubt a solemn thing to think that the eye of that God who dwelleth in heaven is constantly open upon us, and that, go where we may, we cannot for a single instant escape from his sight ; but it is unspeakably more solemn to believe, as the Christian is taught to do, not so much that God is looking upon him from the distant heaven, as that God has come to him, and has made his abode within him—that the everlasting Spirit of all truth is present to every movement of his inmost soul, and immediately in contact with his spirit ; and that, think what he may, whether it be for good or for evil, the thought is formed and entertained, not only under the eye, but within the very secret residence of the Deity. Let a Christian weigh well and constantly this truth, and it will constrain him more powerfully than any

thing else to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. To feel habitually that his soul is thus the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that a Divine and gracious power is constantly exerted upon his heart—to remember that every desire, and thought, and feeling that he cherishes is either in conformity with that power or in opposition to it, and that, consequently, at every moment he must be either led by the Spirit or given over of the Spirit—to live under an abiding sense of this will teach the believer effectually what manner of person he ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. What ought to be the purity maintained within the sanctuary of that soul whose privilege it is to be constituted a residence and a temple for the Holy Ghost? and with what deep fear and trembling ought he to regard the possibility of sin entering into and defiling that abode which is consecrated by the presence of Him who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence? It is impossible to imagine a more awful motive to vigilance and holy jealousy than that which is supplied to the believer in the reflection that the entrance of an evil thought, or feeling, or purpose, into his soul, is a profanation done to the dwelling-place of God, and a despite unto his Holy Spirit; that the cherishing of such iniquity in the heart may at length provoke the Divine Inhabitant to withdraw altogether from the polluted abode—to give it up to the defilement which it has chosen, and to abandon it for ever to the possession of sins wilfully indulged. The very thought of such a result will be enough to awaken every latent energy within the Christian's heart; and the consciousness, therefore, that God dwelleth in him by his Spirit, and is continually working in him with a view to carry forward the moral advancement of his nature, will be the most effectual of all arguments to zeal, and diligence, and perseverance in the work of the Lord.



## SERMON XVI.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S THREATENED JUDGMENTS AND  
PROMISED MERCIES.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DOIG, A.M., TORRYBURN.

"These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, when they numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai: for the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness; and there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."—NUM. xxvi. 63—65.

As a ground of security that we shall inherit the promises, it is not enough that we can point to a time when we were numbered amongst the members of the visible church. The believer, it is true, draws encouragement from a review of the way by which God has led him, and may legitimately infer, that "He who hath begun a good work" in him "will perform it until the day of Christ." Yet profession may be mistaken for conversion. However highly we may have been favoured with the means of grace—however regular our attendance on these means may have been—nay, however great may have been our seeming delight in the enjoyment of them, we may never, in reality, have laid hold of Christ. He only that "endureth to the end shall be saved." The Lord's people will undoubtedly be so "kept by the power of God," as to make it manifest, at the great day, that not one of them has been lost. Yet, during the entire period of their life on earth, they will be found "running with patience the race that is set before them; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," they will be ever "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

These views are confirmed by the universal tenor of Holy Writ; where it is distinctly declared, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And nowhere is this more strikingly exhibited than in the dealings of God with the Israelites who quitted Egypt to go to the land of Canaan. Search the records of history, and where will you find a people whose mercies were so great—in whose favour so many miracles were wrought—or who apparently, at the outset, were stronger in faith, and more devoted to the Lord? Marching in triumph out of the land of bondage, with their faces directed towards the promised inheritance, they presented the appearance of a glorious host;

and, when numbered at Sinai, they amounted, in addition to the Levites, to six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men, of the age of twenty years and upwards. They were detained, however, in the wilderness, because of unbelief; and, after the lapse of thirty-nine years, were again numbered in the plains of Moab, when they were found to be six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty males, of the age of twenty years and upwards—a number nearly as great as ever, and which evinced the truth of God's promise, that he would, at all times, have a seed to serve him. "But among them there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai: for the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness; and there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." They were overthrown in the desert. Instead of entering the promised land, they fell by the way, monuments of God's displeasure against them for their sins.

We are not, indeed, to infer that all who were thus punished perished eternally. As it was with Aaron, who is styled "the Saint of the Lord,"—and with Moses, who, for one rash word he had uttered, was excluded from Canaan,—many of those who died in the wilderness may have been visited with temporal judgment, while they were saved from the wrath to come. Their case, however, is declared to be "an ensample to us," that we may "fear, lest a promise having been given us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."

In discoursing on the intimation in our text, we may view it as furnishing a solemn confirmation of the fact, that God will fulfil his threatenings against sinners on the one hand, and his promises in favour of his own people on the other.

I. We are here furnished with a confirmation of the fact that God will fulfil his threatenings against sinners.

It is by no means unlikely that the Israelites in the wilderness imagined they would escape the judgment pronounced against them, until, individually, they experienced the sad reality. Thus, as a ground of security,

1. We may conceive them to have counted upon their *numerical strength*.

This has often been appealed to as a security against the punishment of crime. Nor can it be denied that, according as iniquity abounds in a community, it is the more rarely visited with its merited penalty. It is found, in such circumstances, not to be convenient to institute inquiry; and vice, with the colouring which the spirit of the age may have given

to it, assumes not unfrequently the name of virtue. But it is far otherwise with Him whose power, holiness, and justice are infinite. If transgressors of his law flatter themselves, with impunity, because of their number, it can only be because, with an understanding blinded by sin, they think of God as if he were a creature like themselves. And, apart from other illustrations, such thoughts, where they are entertained, furnish a melancholy proof of the apostacy of man; the very silliness of the sinner being an evidence of the fall.

I have no doubt that many a transgressor calculates on escaping final condemnation, because, to whatever quarter he turns, he meets with multitudes of a character like his own. He knows that he is a drunkard, or a liar, or a swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or that he is dishonest or unclean. But, because there are so many such in the world, he cannot conceive it possible that God will punish so vast a multitude by sending them all to hell. Foolish mortal! thou reasonest as if God were a man like thyself. And the very manner of thy reasoning, implying, as it does, a denial of that which is essential to the Divine character, is the surest of all evidence that condemnation awaits thee. Look to the case of Israel, recorded in our text. Of the six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men, regarding whom—with the exception of two, who followed him fully—God had sworn that they should “not enter into his rest,”—all were made to feel that his threatenings were sure. Not one of the guilty multitude escaped whom he had sentenced to die in the wilderness. All of them fell during their progress through the desert. All of them were buried within its dreary confines. Not a man of them entered the land of promise. So it has been with the unbelieving in every age. The multitude of the ungodly has not been of avail to save them. And at the judgment of the great day, when the entire company of sinners are gathered together, their *number* will invest with additional solemnity the sentence that consigns them through eternity to “the devil and his angels.”

2. It is not improbable that, as a ground of security against threatened judgment, the Israelites in the wilderness counted on their *privileges*.

As an Apostle expresses it, they “were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ.” Here was an assemblage of privileges, such as no nation had ever enjoyed. Nor was an abuse of these privileges attended by their removal. While threatened with judgment, the Israelites were still visited with mercy. Amidst all their murmurings, the pillar

of cloud went before them by day, and the pillar of fire by night. The manna from heaven fell around their tents as copiously as ever. The rocks of the desert were cleft asunder, and the stream, for the quenching of their thirst, flowed full as before. These were precious benefits, designed to lead them to repentance. But their hearts were not melted; their unbelief was manifested, and their rebellion broke forth, when occasion offered, as formerly.

Yet, on the fact of their being thus graciously dealt with, they may have built the conclusion that they would not be shut out from the land of promise. So, at least, multitudes in every age have reasoned in regard to their final well-being. They enjoy manifold tokens of the Divine goodness, and, therefore, presume that it cannot in the end go ill with them. They have been baptized; they have the Holy Scriptures in their hands; the Word and Sacraments are set before them. Nor, avowedly, are these treated by them with contempt. On the contrary, they put a high value on their baptism. They admit the Bible to be the record of inspiration. By attending the sanctuary they do homage to the Gospel. They partake of the Lord's Supper, and thus outwardly profess to be the Lord's followers. These are privileges, with the enjoyment of which they are favoured. And would they continue to be thus favoured, if the Lord had purposed to destroy them?

On this principle many a sinner reasons, and reasons to his own destruction; forgetting that the higher his privileges, the greater the punishment they involve, if unimproved. The execution of the sentence of death upon the Israelites was the more solemn, because executed amidst the enjoyment of the means of grace. They died, the monuments of Divine wrath—while on every side they were surrounded with privileges. They died, in that camp which was the camp of the living God. They died, within sight of the Lord's tabernacle, and of the ark of the Lord's covenant. They died, while the manna from heaven was falling around them, and the stream from the smitten rock flowing before their eyes. They died, while the glory of the Lord was in their view—while the pillar in which the Lord himself dwelt was over their head—while, as a cloud to refresh them, it was over them by day; and as a fire to give them light, was over them by night. These their privileges did not preserve them; and neither will yours preserve you. You may die without an interest in Christ, although you have been baptised in his name. You may die uninterested in the blessings of the new covenant, although in the symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood you have outwardly participated in these blessings. You may die, and have no part in the great salvation, although you were to die under the sound of the gospel, under the roof of God's own temple, or

even in the act of receiving the elements at the Communion Table. Ah ! flatter not yourselves with the abundance of your privileges. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." You may not avowedly despise your mercies—yet you may die without an interest in Christ. And if so, it will be with you and with all who are like-minded, as it was with the Israelites on the occasion of their second numbering, when not one was found to have escaped of whom it had been said, "Ye shall not enter into my rest."

3. The Israelites in the wilderness may have been tempted to infer that the Lord would not execute his threatened vengeance against them, because all were not *at one and the same time* visited with punishment.

Judgment was executed upon some immediately after sentence was pronounced. But to a vast multitude a respite was granted—and not a few were alive, after nearly forty years had elapsed, and when the time of entering Canaan was at hand. They were spared for a season, that they might consider their ways, and that a race of believers might be raised up to succeed them.

It is not unlikely, however, that this very forbearance with which they were visited was perverted into a ground of supposed security. So, at least, sinners often have presumed on the long-suffering of God. "Because sentence against their evil deeds is not executed speedily, their hearts are set in them to do evil." The cry of the scoffer has been, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." He may, indeed, seem to tarry ; and his judgment may for a season be delayed. Come, however, it will at last ; and not unfrequently, in the case of individual transgressors, it comes when all dread of it is over. God may have many reasons for deferring the execution of his threatenings ; and some of the most amazing developments of his providence have been associated with this delay. But the respite thus granted only aggravates the impending doom. There still is "wrath treasured up against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;" and it is declared accordingly that "the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed."

Hoary-headed transgressor ! the Lord has long borne with thee ; and thou presumest therefore that he will bear with thee for ever. But it is a delusive hope. Look to the sinners of Israel, against whom sentence of exclusion from Canaan was pronounced. To some of them a respite of nearly forty years was granted. But, when apparently within reach of the land of promise—when its hills and mountains were in view before their eyes—when they had only to march forward one other stage

and to cross the Jordan, in order to obtain possession of it—the last of the doomed generation died—the wilderness became their grave—there their carcasses fell; and their burial there made it manifest that God's threatenings are sure.

II. But in our text we are furnished with an impressive illustration of the fact, that as God will fulfil his threatenings against sinners, so also his promises in favour of his own people. "There was not left a man of them," says the sacred historian, "save Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."

These believed the word of the Lord, and followed him fully; and whilst all who had been numbered along with them in the wilderness of Sinai were cut off, they were preserved, and entered into the promised rest. Thus was God's gracious declaration in their favour signally fulfilled; and thus also was a pledge afforded of its accomplishment in favour of all who trust in him. On the principle, indeed, of worldly calculation, the prospects of the Lord's people seem involved in much doubt and uncertainty. When we think how vast is the crowd of the ungodly with which they are mingled, how great are the dangers to which they are exposed, and how long and intricate the path is which they have to traverse, we are almost tempted to distrust the fact of their safety. Yet all that regards their condition, whether for time or for eternity, is well ordered and sure.

1. This, in the case of Caleb and Joshua, was made manifest, notwithstanding the crowd of the ungodly with which they were mingled.

When the Israelites quitted Egypt, there was nothing apparently in the condition of these two individuals different from that of their countrymen. Nor, after it was declared that they had found favour in the sight of God, does it appear that a mark was put upon them, to single them out from their fellow-travellers. Had a stranger visited the camp of Israel, he would have seen nothing, as he passed from tent to tent, to indicate that the prospects of these men were better than those of others; and, looking at their own case, might they not have feared lest they should be forgotten amidst the multitude of sinners around them?

But, "the Lord knoweth them that are his." He loves them, as his chosen, with an everlasting love. They are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." In the camp of Israel, Caleb and Joshua seemed as if unnoticed and unknown. But the Lord knew them; the Lord noticed them; the Lord protected them; and the word of the Lord, by which he had pledged himself to lead them to Canaan, was sure. O, then, "fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give

you the kingdom." He who "telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names," has the name of every one of his people written in his book. Disciple of the Lord! wherever thou mayest be, thou art known unto Him in whom thou hast believed; and his promise, which he has given thee, is the pledge of thy safety. Art thou in the desert, where no living voice breaks in upon thy loneliness?—amidst the dreary solitude the Lord sees thee, and marks thee as his own. Art thou in the crowded city?—amidst the throng, by which its streets are occupied, He notices thy footsteps, and attends thee in all thy goings. Art thou afar off upon the ocean?—the Lord, who orders the rise and the fall of every wave, guides thee in thy course, and keeps thee as one of his chosen. Wherever thy lot may be cast, it is his sun that shines upon thy head; it is his stars that give thee light; it is his air that thou breathest; it is his food with which thou art supplied. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him; and the hairs of thy head are all numbered."

2. In the case of Caleb and Joshua, we are furnished with a confirmation of the truth of God's gracious promises to his people notwithstanding *the dangers to which they are exposed*.

Viewed as a man of the world would have regarded it, it might have been said, that there was but little in their prospect of an establishment in Canaan to inspire them with confidence. To the perils of a journey through the desert they were exposed alike with their companions. And who, besides, might have ventured to affirm that they would escape the many plagues with which the camp of Israel was afterwards so fatally visited—when the fire of the Lord burned at Taberah—when the pestilence raged at Kibroth—when the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up Korah and his company—when fiery serpents were sent among the host, and "much people of Israel died."—Were not these men exposed to the same dangers as others? So the world would have said, and have shaken her head in derision of their hope.

But faith speaks a different language. Faith, which the world views as folly—which the world styles fanaticism—which the world sneers at as hypocrisy—faith can rise, superior to every note of alarm, or appearance of danger. Resting on the promise of God, it can pierce the darkest of all clouds. When all around is shaken, it "endures, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Whatever might be the dangers to which Caleb and Joshua were exposed, when their fellow travellers were, on every side, visited with death, the promise of the Lord was sufficient to remove their fears. And in the result, as made manifest in their case, how striking the confirmation exhibited of the fact, that the Lord's promises in favour of his

people will all be fulfilled! There may, apparently, be much in the way to prevent their accomplishment. The dangers to which the believer is exposed are confessedly great. The devil, the world, and the flesh, are set against him, eagerly desiring his overthrow, yet he is safe. There is a covenant, in which he is interested, whose origin is coeval with a past eternity, and whose issues are commensurate with an eternity to come. Let the earth, then, "be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,"—let the waters roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Child of God! thou art safe amidst all these convulsions; thou needest not to be "afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul."

3. In the instance referred to in our text we behold the fulfilment of God's gracious promises to his people, in opposition to every sentiment of distrust arising from *the length and intricacy of their path*.

The length and intricacy of the way by which the Israelites were conducted to Canaan went far, according to the principles of man's judgment, to render void the promise of God. Towards the close of the first year of their pilgrimage they had arrived at the border of the promised land. Not only, however, in these circumstances, were they sentenced, because of their unbelief, to wander forty years in the wilderness, but when this long term had been almost completed, and they had come once more to the border of Canaan, they were commanded to go back to the Red Sea, and to traverse again that desert which they had thought they were leaving for ever. Did it not look, in these circumstances, as if the word of the Lord had failed? Nor is it unlikely that, on observing this, the neighbouring nations made the hopes of Israel the subject of their mockery.

But He, who had sworn that the land of Canaan should be given to the seed of Abraham, was neither unmindful of his oath, nor unable to perform it. The issue, at the time appointed, proved that his word was true. When the journey was prolonged, and one after another of the travellers fell by the way, till the sand of the desert had become the grave of almost an entire generation, it did indeed look as if Caleb and Joshua might be the next to leave their bones in the wilderness. But the word of the living God had been pledged for their safety. Every day, therefore, and every year, as it passed over their heads, afforded increasing



evidence of the truth of the promise, till, at last, it was ratified in the inheritance of Canaan.

Now, so in every age it has been with the promises of the Lord to his people. No length of time that may intervene—no seeming perplexity that may ensue—can impair the certainty of their fulfilment. There may be much in the believer's lot, as the world sees it—there may be much in the character even of his own experience in connection with it—which, viewed in itself, might lead to distrust. What has he gained, the world is ready to ask, during all this time that he has waited? And why is it, he may often be ready himself to ask, why is it he is thus mysteriously dealt with? Yet, Christian, thou hast not waited in vain. Thy God, who hath "fed thee all thy life long," is leading thee "by the right way," that thou mayest "go to a city of habitation." Yet a little while, and it will be made manifest that "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken concerning thee." Faith will be exchanged for sight, and the discipline of the wilderness for the blessedness of Canaan.

Have you, then, the promises of your Covenant God to lean upon? what remains for you, but to "hold fast your profession without wavering?" Keep by Him who is your gracious and all-sufficient Redeemer. Follow him in the path, whatever it may be, which he has seen it meet to mark out for you, in the firm persuasion that he will never leave nor forsake you. When his work in you, and with you, here below is done, he will bring you into that blessed land whose fruits will be your portion for ever; and on that day when he shall "count the dust of Jacob," and reckon up the number of his chosen, your names will be found in "the book of life;" and every blessing written in that book will be yours. Who amongst you will be thus reckoned on that day? Try yourselves by the unerring standard of God's Word, that you may know whether you are now walking in the way of the Lord, and that you may have ground for believing that you will be remembered by him when he "maketh up his jewels."

## SERMON XVII.

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

BY THE REV. W. NICOLSON, FERRY-PORT-ON-CRAIG.

"The Lord is at hand."—PHILIP. iv. 5.

THERE is a great difference between the theoretical and the practical recognition of any truth ; and a little attention to this difference might help us to account for much of the practical ungodliness that abounds in the world. The habit of substituting the theoretical for the practical, is by far too common a feature in the character of fallen man ; and, in a thousand instances, when the sinner is detected in a practical violation of any truth, does he find a ready justification of himself in a verbal, or a speculative, or a theoretical admission of its obligations. Thus, for example, how common a thing it is to hear the transgressor against the law of temperance, acknowledging the duty and propriety of moderation and sobriety. Speak to him, in his sober moments, and tell him of the sin of drunkenness, and of the disastrous effects resulting from it, both to his temporal and spiritual interests, and he will generally be found to acknowledge in words the truth of all you say to him. Thus does the intemperate man condemn intemperance. Or speak to the neglecter of Divine ordinances, and set forth the duty of keeping the Sabbath, by waiting upon God in the preaching of the word, and you are in most cases sure to meet with a ready acknowledgment of the very becoming and proper habit of going to church. In his own case, he adroitly finds some hindrance by which he justifies his own practice ; but in comparatively few instances will the propriety of the duty itself be denied. Thus will the Sabbath-breaker condemn the Sabbath-breaker.

This combination of theoretical soundness with practical unsoundness may be found still more widely prevalent in its application to the doctrine involved in the text. It is only among the more desperate and daring of the enemies of the truth that we will ever hear the existence and omnipresence of God denied. Most men acknowledge this ; so that, if we were to make the admission or denial of this truth the test of discipleship, we might easily arrive at the happy conclusion, that comparatively few in this land were to be regarded as unworthy of the name

and the privileges of the friends of Jesus. Yet, with all this soundness of speculative belief, where are we to look for the practical influence of this solemn truth, that the Lord is at hand? Are there not thousands who make no hesitation in admitting that the Lord is ever nigh to them? That there is an omnipresent God, and that God himself has communicated to us the knowledge of this truth, are surely considerations all too important to be merely regarded as matters of speculation. And it may be worthy of our consideration, in what way this doctrine ought to affect mankind practically; and to this end, to inquire into the nature and evidences of the truth so concisely and emphatically announced in the text.

Now, we apprehend the words of the Apostle admit both of a general and of a special application; and both these views of the passage may be illustrated according to the following plan.

I. We shall notice generally the doctrine of the Lord's all-pervading presence throughout all his works—He is ever at hand.

II. We shall notice some of those occasions which are calculated more especially to remind us of his presence and of his future appearing to judgment.

III. Consider the ground and source of the sinner's safety as in the Lord's presence, and at his future coming to judgment; and then,

IV. Conclude by adverting to what ought to be the practical effects of the warning in the text.

I. Let us shortly notice the doctrine of the omnipresence of God; for, observe, these words of the Apostle are not such as may only be addressed to some persons, or some families, or some nations. Among all people, and in all places of the earth, may it with equal truth be said, the Lord is at hand. Nor is it merely to certain solemn occasions that these words are applicable, as if the Lord's presence were only to be recognised in his holy ordinances, or when we engage in the exercises of his worship. When we arise in the morning, and go forth into the busy scenes of life, and mingle with the men and the business of the world, it is no less true that the Lord is near, than when we are laying our evening sacrifice upon the family altar, and, with our assembled households, raising the hymn of praise and the prayer of faith to the throne on high. On such occasions, indeed, the Lord is near; but does he withdraw from the pious family when their services of devout worship are over? Does he leave the dwelling of his worshippers when prayer is ended? Is it not rather in faith and expectation of his continued presence that prayer is offered? The Lord is present with his people, according to his promise, when they are assembled in his house; but does he withdraw himself from his people

when they leave the public altars, and repair to their own dwellings? The Lord Jesus is present with the humble and believing wrestler when alone with his God, and when, retired from the world, he bends the knee before the mercy-seat. But when he opens the door of his secret chamber, and goes forth to the duties of life, does he imagine that he is no longer in the sight of his Saviour? In the field, and by the way-side—in the sequestered dwelling, and in the busy haunts of men—in the cottage of the poor, and in the palace of princes—God is necessarily and continually present. Where is the great I AM not to be found? Mark the striking words of the Psalmist, Psalm cxxxix. 1-12, “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” All this will be readily acknowledged. This truth, that the Lord is ever at hand—that he is not far from any one of us—will seldom, if ever, be denied in words. This is the theory. But can we read an acknowledgment of this truth in the lives as well as in the words of mankind? Does the usual tenor of men’s lives testify that they feel themselves thus ever in the sight of God? Does the habitual remembrance of this truth deter from sin, and beget a holy reverence for his name? True, every time is not a time for exclusive meditation on God, but every time is a time for feeling the influence of this truth. The habitual influence of it is exemplified in Noah, who walked with God; and it will be the daily aim of every really good man to walk with God in habitually remembering his promise.

Now, the very same practical results ought to arise, whether we regard the passage as denoting the Lord’s presence with us now, or as declaring his near approach. This latter meaning, indeed, is that which is chiefly intended in the text. The words literally signify, *the Lord is near*. The interval is short that is to elapse between the present time and his coming. This may be affirmed of the coming of the Lord, whether we apply the words to his coming to each of us at death, or to his coming to

the final judgment at the end of the world. Nor need any man look upon the coming of the Lord to judgment, as being a more distant period to him than his own departure, in so far as his season of preparation is concerned—for, as death leaves him, judgment will find him.

It may seem otherwise, indeed, to such as listen to the extravagant imaginations of those who maintain the existence of purgatorial fire, or the figment of a middle state of preparation. But the believer rejoices in the prospect of passing from the body, to the presence of his Redeemer—with Paul, he believes that he departs from the world to be with Christ.

The present times are not barren of indications of the Lord being at hand, in some of those momentous events, by which prophecy is to be fulfilled, and the glory of the latter day ushered in. Although the Lord Jesus is always present with his Church, yet his presence is sometimes indicated by more impressive signs, and more searching visitations. And we believe a time of sifting and separation is at hand, when a clearer distinction is to be made between Christ's faithful witnesses, and those who bear only the name of his people, without knowing their spirit.

Without dwelling, then, upon any further explanation of the precise bearing of the words, we shall now proceed to consider,

II. Some of those occasions which are calculated, more especially, to remind us of the truth set forth in the text.

1st, God's visitations, in the death of those around us, are seasons calculated to remind us that the Lord is at hand. There is, perhaps, no event that so immediately connects our thoughts with eternity, as that of death. When our connection with some much-loved object is cut asunder, our thoughts naturally follow that object, in many a meditation, as to what it has now become, and where it has now gone. The body is laid in the peaceful grave, and we think of the opening again of that grave in the morning of the Resurrection—we think of the re-animation of the mortal, but then to be glorified body. When the lifeless body is left to us as the only object of our care, how fondly do our thoughts try to follow the departed spirit!—how anxiously do we hope that from sin and suffering it is now free!—our thoughts are in eternity, and we cannot help realising the period when we too shall enter the dark valley, and pass away into the now to us unknown regions of eternity. How impressively do these things remind us, that the Lord is at hand!

Mark, again, how far speculative belief produces practical results. The certainty of death no man denies—*when* that event may occur, no man can tell. And yet, in the midst of all this uncertainty, men just

live on, as heedless of the solemn hour as if no such hour were approaching. The awful uncertainty of the time of our death—certain as all men are—that such a time is drawing nearer and nearer every moment—seems little to affect the minds of thousands, whose theoretical and practical recognition of the solemn truth, that all must die, are so little accordant with one another. “Put the case,” says a quaint writer upon this subject, “that one man should give unto another many loaves of bread, conditioned that he should every day eat one; but if the party should come to know that in one of them lay hid a parcel of deadly poison, yet in which of them it was he should be utterly ignorant—O how careful would he be in tasting any of them, lest he should light upon that which might prove his fatal destruction. Thus it is that God has given unto us many days—to some more, to some less—but in one of these he hath, unknown to us, conveyed the bitter sting of death; and it may so fall out, that in the day of our greatest rejoicing, a deadly cup of poison may be reached out unto us. Death, like an unbidden guest, may rush in upon us, and spoil all our mirth on a sudden. O how watchful, how diligent, should the consideration of these things make every one of us to be, to look upon every day as the day of our death, every breathing the last breathing we shall make—to think upon the ringing of every passing bell, that ours may be next—upon hearing the clock strike, that there is an hour less to live, and one step nearer to our long home, the house appointed for all living,”\*

2d, Our own advancing years may remind us that the Lord is at hand—that the distance between us and eternity is short, and still shortening every hour. How soon do we advance from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age! What does the oldest among us now think of the period that has elapsed since he joyed in the buoyancy and hopefulness of youth! How short does it seem—how insensibly has it passed away! We need not ask the young about the shortness of human life, for that would be asking the way at those who never travelled it. But ask the man of threescore years and ten, or fourscore years. He has travelled over the path, and is now very near the end of it, and he can tell that it has proved but labour and sorrow. He can tell that he now sees nothing worth going through all that labour and sorrow for, but for living to God and preparing for eternity. This were indeed an object worth all the toils of his pilgrimage, but nothing else is. But oh! how few are permitted to travel over the whole period of fourscore years! Let the old man just count how many of those now remain on the road that set out with him.

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\* Spencer.

Now, this consideration of the speedy flight of time, and the awful uncertainty on what day or hour we may be arrested, solemnly says to us, "the Lord is at hand." "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Let each of you count your years, and say how very small a portion of the average of life now remains to you.

3d, The vicissitude of the seasons may also remind us of the near approach of the Lord's coming, whether at death to each of us, or at judgment to all of us.

The return of the season, when one year ends its course and another begins, is regarded by most people as a season for marking and commemorating the onward march of time. There is, however, a striking dissimilarity in the way in which different classes commemorate the return of that season. By some it is improved, as a befitting season for a devout and religious improvement of the times and opportunities which the Lord is graciously lengthening out to us; while by others it is set apart as a season for unhallowed and sinful revelry. As if the goodness and long-suffering of God in prolonging our days were an encouragement still more heedlessly to provoke that long-suffering, do we often find the objects of it madly giving themselves up to a reckless forgetfulness of God in soul-destroying dissipation. No season is better fitted to bring home to the mind the impressive truth, that the years of our pilgrimage are like a tale that is told, and that they fly away as a shadow. And is this a lesson calculated to beget thoughtlessness? Is this a truth that ought to awaken carnal mirth? If another year is gone—if we are so much nearer the grave—if, by so much, the distance between us and the eternal world has been shortened—is there nothing in this to awaken the reflection, the Lord is at hand? Multitudes have fallen around me since last year began—who can tell the names, or the number, of those that are destined to fall ere this year be ended? They are known to God.

It was a very natural question that Pharaoh put to Joseph's aged father, when introduced into his presence, on his arrival in Egypt, "How old art thou?" This question is often put to old men, and, although it is often prompted merely by a principle of curiosity, it is, nevertheless, fitted to awaken in our minds many salutary reflections. But it is a question which might be put to each of us with reference to our spiritual state, as well as to the number of the years of our natural life, What progress have you made in the spiritual life? He must know little of the life of a true believer, who does not know that it is a life of progression. It is upon this principle that we are exhorted to grow in grace. And the Apostle himself, although a man of high attainments in the Divine life, did not count himself to have apprehended, but this one

thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii. 13.) There are babes in Christ, young men and fathers : hence, there is milk for the one and strong meat for the other. All have not the same spiritual attainments, but every true believer strives after increasing holiness. In a spiritual sense, then, the question may be put to every child of God, "How old art thou?"

There is a beautiful analogy between the growth of the different members of the body, and the growth of a believer in the Divine life. When a man is born again, he may be compared to the child at its birth. All the members are fully formed, although, as yet, weak and tender. They all grow together, each according to its measure, until the full stature of manhood is attained. In like manner, all the members of the spiritual man, such as faith, love, humility, each according to its measure, advance onwards to perfection, until the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus is attained. One Christian may come sooner to perfection than another, just as two setting out together upon a journey may not, with equal speed, reach its termination, yet all have spiritual perfection as their object, and, like Paul, consider not themselves to have apprehended until that object be attained. All the children of the same family may not enjoy the same measure of bodily health and strength, nor reach their full stature at the same age; so the followers of Jesus are not all possessed of the same measure of spiritual vigour, nor do they all grow in grace with equal pace, yet all who are in Christ grow in grace, and perfection is their aim.

4th, Again, referring the words of the text to the coming of our Lord and Saviour to judgment, it is obvious, that, as time rolls on, they will be acquiring additional force and solemnity. If, when Paul wrote these words to the Church at Philippi, the Lord was at hand, now that nearly two thousand years have run their course, with what truth and emphasis may the announcement fall upon our ears,—the Lord is at hand ! He is at hand now, in the publication of the gospel, and he will soon be here to open the books, and judge the world. The various dispensations of his providence to the Church, must be accomplished ere the rending heavens reveal the coming judge; but, according to the predictions of the Word of Revelation, these dispensations are now far advanced towards the latter scenes of the Church's conflicts, and, accordingly, the people of God are now taught, and warranted, to look forward to the near approach of that mighty battle, in which the Man of Sin is to make his last desperate effort to reduce the world to his despotic and enthralling power, but which will be shortly followed by his final overthrow, and the



Church's glorious and complete emancipation from bondage and oppression. Then shall

The beam that shines from Zion hill  
Enlighten every land;  
The King that reigns in Salem's towers  
Shall all the world command.

III. We shall now consider the ground and source of the sinner's safety at the coming of the Lord.

1st, It would have been but a needless excitement of the fears and alarms of guilty men, to have announced to them the approaching ordeal of a judgment-seat, without, at the same time, directing the views of the guilty to a remedy for their miseries. Such, however, is not the character of God's revelation. The remedy is provided. It is not more clearly set forth that man is under the curse of a broken law, than that Christ delivers his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. The clear and unambiguous declaration of the Word of God is, that the sinner can be justified only by the righteousness of Christ. This doctrine was taught in the Old Testament sacrifices, and clearly set forth in the writings of the Prophets. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed: all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And the apostle Paul says, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous:" and again, "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." In saying, however, that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, let it be clearly understood what this implies; for different views have been entertained as to the place which this righteousness holds in the scheme of redemption. Some have regarded the righteousness of Christ as merely supplementary to ours; that is, that his righteousness is designed to make up for our deficiency. This is putting the Saviour into a subordinate place in the scheme of man's salvation. According to this view, Christ is not all our salvation, but only a part of it. It is making the sinner in part his own justifier, and

they who hold such an opinion cannot say with the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory;" nor with the Apostle, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, hath he saved us." If all our righteousness be as filthy rags in the sight of God, how impious to ascribe our justification, even in part, to such a righteousness! Nor is there in all the Word of God any warrant for such a dishonouring view of the complete and all-sufficient righteousness of Christ. His righteousness, when imputed to the sinner, and received by faith, is the only and the all-sufficient ground of his justification.

But again, it has also been held by those who would make the sinner stand upon his own righteousness, that the law of God, under the gospel, has been brought down to the level of our capacity for obeying it. All such dogmas are a virtual denial of Christ, and robbing him of his glory. This would neither be magnifying nor making honourable the law. To bring down the law of God to the level of our capacity, would just be to extinguish it altogether; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. It is with our own righteousness, when we receive, and are justified by Christ's, as it is with the stars when the sun shines. The stars appear beautiful objects in the night, and in the absence of the sun; but let the sun arise and reach his mid-day splendour, where are the stars then? Would it diminish aught from the light of noon-day, although all the stars in the firmament were blotted out from their spheres? Neither does a man's *own righteousness* add anything to the excellency of his character, when the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon him. His own glory disappears, and Christ is to him all his salvation. If, then, we tell the sinner that the Day of Judgment is approaching—that the Lord is at hand—and urge him to prepare for that day, what must be our counsel to him? Shall we beseech him to set himself diligently to do this and the other thing in the way of religious duty, such as prayer, church-going, alms-deeds? We would not, indeed, have any man to believe that these things are unnecessary; but neither would we have any man to imagine that these things will secure us justification. We might do all this, and we might succeed in producing these things in his practice, and yet have left the man as far from Christ as ever. We might teach thus a system of dry and sapless morality, the only effect of which might be at once to send the conscience of the sinner to sleep, and encourage within him that legal spirit, which in many, we fear, is a formidable barrier to the acceptance of the Redeemer's justifying righteousness. It is right to urge the sinner to do these things, but it is not right to stop there; neither is it right to make him believe, that

his doing of these things will constitute any part of the ground upon which he is justified. Such is not the ground upon which this matter is put in the Word of God. The immaculate Son of God will not give the glory of this work to another ; he undertook, and he finished the work, and it can receive no help from man. His work is perfect. And whoever has the righteousness of Christ, needeth no other. Whoever comes to the gate of the celestial city with this robe, will need no other passport.

We are aware of a question that some may be disposed to put here, or a difficulty which may occur, namely, What, then, is the use of our duties, and what place do they hold in the scheme of the gospel ? Now this question is easily answered. The difficulty here felt, arises from regarding the believer's duties as a cause instead of an effect. All acceptable obedience proceeds from Divine grace, and cannot, therefore, be the cause of our obtaining grace. No works are acceptable to God which are performed in an unrenewed state. They necessarily want the principle of love, and are dead works ; but when the sinner is renewed by the Spirit of God, he then necessarily performs good works, not as the procuring cause of his justification, but as the fruit and evidence of his being already justified. Hence it is clear, that the way of a sinner's justification is not by performing a righteousness, on account of which he is to be accepted, but by his receiving the righteousness of Christ by faith, and as the fruit of this his obedience will appear.

This, then, warrants us in inviting the most unworthy to come to Christ, and that immediately. Were your own righteousness to be required to procure your welcome, then would we have to call upon you to work out this righteousness first, and then come. But, ah, how hopeless a task this would be ! Come now—naked and poor. Would a fine dress be a needful garb for a beggar asking clothing ? or well stored barns necessary to entitle their possessor to ask the bread of charity ? While, then, the approach of the Judge is solemnly announced ; there is also announced the name and the qualifications of a mediator and advocate of the judge's own appointment, through whose hands the cause of every man must come, ere it can be listened to, or favourably received.

Were any sovereign to appoint a day of high assize, to be held in any part of his dominions, and at the sametime to appoint an able and skilful advocate, by whom every cause was to be conducted, inviting all to commit their cause to his hands, with certification that no one would be accepted by the judge who did not avail himself of this offer ; when the day arrived, if there should be multitudes found claiming the favourable ear of the judge through other channels, and preferring their claims through advocates of their own choosing, would any of them have cause

of complaint for being utterly rejected? Surely no. So they who seek a hearing upon any other ground whatever than the merits of Christ, shall be rejected. Some may be trusting to their prayers, some to their Church going, some to their charity, but none shall find acceptance when the Lord comes, but such as stand upon the footing of the Redeemer's righteousness.

Why should man be so unwilling to embrace this, the only way of deliverance and safety? Is it because he believes the way of his own righteousness more likely to succeed, or is it because he feels not the burden of his misery sufficiently oppressive to make him willing, upon any terms, to have it removed? When leprous Naaman was requested to wash in Siloam's Pool, his indignation was awakened, because he considered the waters of his own country just as likely to cure him as the waters of Israel. So with self-righteous man; he thinks his own means just as good as those which are provided in Israel. But, like Naaman, he must be convinced of his error before he be cured. His leprosy will cleave to him, unless he wash in the waters of Israel. He must go to Christ, or abide in sin.

2d, We remark, further, that there can be no security for the sinner's safety at the coming of the Lord, unless he has been born again.

Not only are we assured that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, but also that this holiness cannot be attained without being born again. Our Lord himself hath said, "Unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, although there may be many degrees of outward and seeming conformity to the law of God, without any saving conversion, yet in none of them can the Omniscient eye of God recognise the true evangelical obedience of a true disciple. Let the well known principle be here applied, that the worth of an action depends upon the inward motive which gives it birth; and hear what saith the Scripture, "the carnal mind is enmity against God"—"the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." If such be the character of man's heart, then is it evident that heart must be changed before it can either be the seat of holy affections, or produce holy actions. The fountain must be pure, in order that the waters may be pure that issue out of it. Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh into the heart.

Now, conversion is the work of the Spirit of God. Hence, man's merit is altogether excluded. The very first step in the turning of the soul to God is of free grace. It is the Spirit that worketh in us, rooting out our enmity, and implanting that faith which worketh by love, and that love which is the fulfilling of the law.

3d, Lastly, on this branch of our subject, let the sinner, in consult-

ing his safety, take special care that he may be found at his Lord's coming among his Lord's friends.

Now, if I am asked how any one is to take care of this matter—how any one can *now* see to it, that he may be found among the Lord's chosen, when the vast assembly shall stand before the throne, I answer, let him take care to be found among the Lord's people *now*. The distinction between the Lord's true people and his enemies, is not now marked by their standing in two distinct companies; but, in regard to real character and spiritual condition, there is, in the eye of God, just as clear a distinction as there will be when they shall be arranged on different sides of the throne on the great Day of Judgment. To be now classified with those who are not his people, is to be in a most perilous position. The Lord is at hand, and what if he come and find me on the enemy's side? There are times when these two classes may be so mingled together, in regard to external character and privileges, that they cannot easily be distinguished; and there are also times when God so sifts and tries the society of the visible Church, as to make a separation between them. How precious the privilege of being found among the true children of Zion, who rejoice in their King, and confide in his grace! With this let no earthly fame, and no earthly fortune, be ever compared. The Lord is at hand, and when he comes, what will avail me but the treasures of his grace, and an interest in his love. But unless I am among his people now, I cannot be permitted to stand among them when he appears. I may stand among them now, though not of them, but when the Lord himself shall come, between the sheep and the goats there will be no communion.

IV. Let us now consider what ought to be the practical effect of the warning in the text.

Every exhortation to preparation for death may be regarded as of similar import to that which the prophet Isaiah addressed to good king Hezekiah, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." However plainly these words of the prophet may refer to those arrangements concerning their temporal affairs which most men are desirous of having completed before they die, they may also be appropriately applied to our spiritual interests. We may take advantage of this expression to set forth the kind of preparation or setting in order of the spiritual concerns of the soul, in the view of our Lord's coming, which the warning in the text ought to produce. Looking, then, at this analogy, it may be remarked in the

*First place*, That a man setting his house in order, with a view to his death, will naturally wish to have all his accounts settled. If he owes

others, or if others owe him, he will desire that, on both sides, all claims may be adjusted. So as to spiritual things. And there are two senses in which we have claims to adjust: we may have this to do with men, and we may have it to do with God. With regard to men, there may sometimes be claims which one may have against another, as to offence given, or injury done, which it is desirable to have adjusted before death cut off all opportunity of so doing. It may, however, sometimes happen that such accounts as these cannot be settled. In order to their being so, the good will of both parties is necessary. If one party should be so resentful, or implacable, as to resist all means of a friendly understanding, there can be no mutual reconciliation or agreement. In this case, however, if one party be desirous of adjustment, and disabuses his mind of all unkind and all unchristian feelings, he will thereby stand acquitted, and cannot be held accountable for the want of Christian spirit in the other. Every man must stand accountable for his own sins. But although there should be no such accounts to settle between man and man, every one of us has an account to settle with God; and the intimation that the Lord is at hand ought to remind us of the necessity of having this account settled. Nor will the sinner ever find any obstacle, on the part of God, to this being done. Although God be the offended party, he makes overtures of peace; he first comes to the sinner seeking reconciliation, and he has also provided a surety for us, who is able and willing to pay all. The claims against us we can never pay. Christ is our surety, and we can only have a free discharge by getting all our debts laid to his account.

*Second*, Men setting their houses in order, in the prospect of death, are desirous of making a clear and distinct record of what they would leave to each of their friends. Now, in a spiritual sense, it is a matter of very deep importance, what are we to leave, at our death, for our children and friends? How solemn the question to the mind of a parent, what instructions will his children have to remember and profit by when he is removed from them? Let parents consider this. When you are removed by death, will your children have your pious and faithful religious instructions to think of and walk by? Or will they have no such happy recollection of you? Then, in regard to them, it is to be feared you have left them no spiritual legacy. If your children never hear of Christ from your lips, nor are ever warned by you against sin and folly, your house is not yet set in order. O think in time, what is the legacy, in this respect, you are bequeathing?

Again, what legacy in the way of example are you leaving? The Lord is at hand, and it is high time to be making some provision for your household ere you leave them. Will your example, then, be a matter

of profitable remembrance to them? Is it such as you would wish them to follow? Are you framing it for their imitation?

*Third,* Another effect which this warning ought to produce is that of watchfulness. When the servant expects his master, but does not know at what hour he may come, he keeps himself in readiness, watching for his arrival. In such a case, it ought to be our care not to be employed in what we would not wish our Lord to find us in when he comes. No servant would like his Lord to come and find him employed in the service of his Lord's enemy; so we would not wish to be found in the service of sin.

*Fourth,* This warning ought to produce diligence. As no servant would wish to be overtaken by his master while in the service of an enemy, so neither would he wish his master to find him idle.

*Fifth,* This warning ought to produce deadness to the world. It is just, in fact, an intimation that we are soon to be done with the world—that in a little while it will be to us as if it had not been. Here, again, we see the difference between theory and practice, for all admit the fact that the world is a perishing portion, and yet multitudes are doing far more to obtain it than to obtain the riches of eternity.

In fine, let this solemn truth announced in the text beget in all of us a prayerful preparation for the coming of our Lord. Let the words of the Apostle Peter find their response in our own bosoms: "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" His mind was so overpowered with a sense of the awful grandeur and important results of the coming of Christ at the end of the world, and of the dissolution of this material globe, that he could not give full expression to the measure of holiness which ought to characterise those who look forward to these events, but exclaimed, in the deep emotion of his soul, "What manner of persons ought we to be?" May the Lord give us grace to be looking for and hasting unto the coming of that day when he shall appear in his glory and all his holy angels with him!—AMEN.

## SERMON XVIII.

VINEYARDS IN THE WILDERNESS.

BY THE REV. J. A. WALLACE, HAWICK.

[Preached at Hawick on the first Sabbath after leaving the Parish Church.]

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt."—HOSEA ii. 14-15.

MY DEAR FRIENDS, it is now ten years since I came for the first time into this parish, having no previous acquaintance with any one of you, and bearing the character of an entire stranger. I scarcely think I ever went to the pulpit before with a heart so oppressed with anxiety, or so cast down with the difficulties that seemed then to be before me. Nevertheless, the first discourse which God sent me to deliver was marked by a memorable incident, which I learned shortly afterwards from the lips of one of the persons who heard it. It went home at once to the heart of that individual, and left an impression that has never been effaced, becoming, as I trust, the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. This, therefore, I could scarcely hesitate to regard as a token for good. And when I look back on all the paths through which I have been conducted between that time and this, I see no reason to regret that my lot has been cast in the midst of you. I am rather inclined to say, that the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, and that God has given to me in times past a goodly heritage.

What it may be for the future I do not know. Sometimes, the prospect is irradiated with streaks of light, like those that gild the horizon at the dawn of a bright morning; at other times, it is laden with heavy clouds, that cast their dark shadows on everything around, and awaken only the feeling of anxiety and fear. Nevertheless, the path of duty is before us, and that path is plain. As for all consequences, be they what they may, we must be content to leave these in the hands of God, who knoweth all things from the end to the beginning, who turneth the hearts of men as the rivers of water, and who hath promised to his people that all things shall be made to work together for their good.



Looking for His blessing, and depending on the grace of his Holy Spirit, we desire to commence our ministrations anew, and in connection with the Free Protestant Church of Scotland. It may be that on this occasion also, and in the day of our adversity, God may give testimony to the word of his own grace; and the soul, peradventure, of some individual who may have come here from a spirit of idle curiosity, and without the solemnity of feeling which the occasion demands, may be arrested and impressed, delivered from the evil and the error of his ways, and made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

With this view, we commence our ministrations in this place, by calling your attention to one of the most comfortable passages which the Bible contains. God grant that our hearts may be opened to understand and to receive it as one of the true sayings of God. The passage is thus written—"Behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."

This passage, in the first instance, has reference to the circumstances of God's ancient and peculiar people, when, by reason of their great and aggravated wickedness, they were subjected to the chastisement of His righteous judgments, though, at the same time, they were dealt with in loving kindness, and in righteousness, and in great mercies. The iniquities, indeed, which they had committed, were of a very offensive character, and were not likely to be passed by with impunity; and that for this reason, that they were the people of God, whom he had specially chosen for himself, and with whom he had entered into covenant. It might have been different, had they belonged to the heathen nations with whom they were surrounded—had they been completely alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, or had they been called to the enjoyment of no peculiar or distinctive privileges. In that case, they might have been left altogether unto themselves, abandoned to the idols of their own choice, and filled with the fruit of their own devices. But they were otherwise situated. They belonged to the family of God. They held the character and position of children. And though, instead of fulfilling the obligations under which they were lying, they had trampled on their richest mercies, violated the covenant engagement into which God had entered with them, and done despite to the Holy One of Israel, yet, on that account, they were not to be abandoned utterly to themselves. They were to be dealt with for their iniquities till, at length, they should be constrained, as by a blessed necessity, to return

unto Him from whom they had so grievously revolted ; and thus, notwithstanding all their shortcomings, and their backslidings, and their provocations, this was to be the mode of the Divine procedure—"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness." God, indeed, is resolved to enter into judgment with her, and to call her to a solemn reckoning for her bypast sins ; and yet there is no apparent severity—no expression of fiery or of consuming indignation. He finds it necessary, for the accomplishment of his own gracious purposes, to remove her from her former idols, and to bring her into the wilderness. But there is no expulsion as by force. He does not drive her, as it were, before him, and make her terribly afraid with the vengeance of his righteous judgments ; but these are the words, "Behold, I will *allure* her." The expression is very striking. It indicates the attractiveness of love and of tenderness. It is the dealing, not of an implacable enemy ; but of a father who is full of mercy and very pitiful. This gives a character of sweetness to the heaviest chastisements of His hand, alluring us into a blessed forgetfulness of the ruggedness of the road over which we are passing, and prompting us to kiss the very rod which is lifted up for our correction. And this is uniformly the way of the Divine procedure with His own people. Ofttimes he finds it necessary to afflict them, and they themselves may feel that his chastisements are very bitter. Yet, in all his dealings, there is so much of the allurements of one that loves them, that the oftener he sees meet to correct them, and the harder the strokes which he continues to inflict upon them, this only is the blessed result, that instead of being roused into hostility against him, or giving more emphatic expression to the passions of a murmuring and discontented spirit, they are actually impressed with a deeper sense of his loving-kindness, and are constrained all the more closely to cling to him. And this, we believe, furnishes one of the most satisfactory tests of sanctified affliction. If, when God is dealing with us in the way of chastisement, we are led to shrink from him with a feeling of instinctive aversion, entertaining hard views of the principles by which he is actuated, and discovering nothing in his character but the attributes of a powerful and implacable judge, there is great reason to fear, that ours are not the light afflictions of a moment, which are productive of the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and which are working out for us the far more exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. But if, when God is taking away our idols, and breaking down our refuges of lies, and casting darkness over the brightest of our worldly prospects, we feel a silent drawing of the spirit towards the very hand that is lifted up for our chastisement—a kind of fascinating allurements, which prompts us to follow hard after him, though he seems to be conducting us over rugged paths, and into the waste places

of a desolate wilderness, then, in that case, we cannot but regard it as the test of sanctified affliction—the sweet and the blessed token that God is dealing with us as with children—the clear and indubitable sign that our tribulations are working out patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even the hope which is as an anchor unto the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

But observe, next, whither it is that God allures his people. The passage does not say that he allures them into paths of pleasantness and of peace—into places that are stored with the richest of all earthly enjoyments—into fields that are enamelled with beautiful flowers, enlivened with rivers of living water, and rejoicing under the sunshine of an unclouded prosperity. We need no allurement to lead us into scenes like these; these are the paths into which our feet are most apt to wander. The place into which God allures his people is altogether different. “Behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness.” Into the wilderness—that is, far away from the scenes of our former enjoyment, or from the cherished objects of our idolatry, or from the fascination of our brightest hopes, or from the fountains of our earthly pleasure. It requires some allurement—some constraining influence—some attractiveness of love and of tenderness—to draw us away from these, for our souls naturally cling to them. We look to them as our chief good. We expect to find in them the elements of our felicity. We are exceedingly loath to leave them. Nevertheless, they are not our portion for ever. They cannot make us permanently happy. It is necessary to the furtherance of our highest interests that we be taken away from them. And therefore it is that God allures us—that he plies us with every argument—that he speaks to us with a voice of tenderness—that he constrains us to yield to the bowels of his irresistible compassions. This is necessary. For why? When he destroys our idols, and dries up the fountain of our earthly felicity, he seldom brings us all at once, or by an easy path, to the blessed enjoyment of a far richer heritage. That, no doubt, will be the ultimate result—the terminating point of all his gracious procedure towards us. But the result may not be immediately realised. The final heritage may not be instantly enjoyed. On the contrary, it is the usual mode of his procedure to lead us first into the wilderness,—not only far away from outward comforts, or from cherished idols, or from bodily health, or from outward ordinances, or from the fountains whence consolation was most likely to be drawn by us; but into circumstances of difficulty, or of trial, or of sorrow—into the wilderness, where there is nothing attractive, nothing inviting—the wilderness, which may seem to ourselves to be dark, and rugged, and waste-howling, and solitary, freed from the traces of vegetation, covered with the stones of emptiness, and darkened

by the shadows of death. Strange that God, in the meantime, should allure his people into the solitude and the desolation of such a scene ! What can be the reason of such procedure ? What blessed results can ever arise from it ?

To this question we are furnished with a reply in the next clause, for it is added, "I will speak comfortably unto her." But could not God have spoken comfortably unto her before ? Could not God have spoken comfortably unto her without bringing her into the wilderness at all ? No doubt he could ; for all things are possible with Him, and he has a right to do according to his own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, none being able to stay his hand from working, or to say unto him, What dost thou ? But what use could there be in speaking comfortably unto her, when she was cleaving to her idols, and rejoicing in the abundance of her riches, and walking in the light of an unclouded prosperity ? In such circumstances, she could not herself be deeply sensible of her misery ; and, amid the eagerness of her pursuit after lying vanities, she could have no relish, no desire, for the kind of consolation which it is the province of God to give. Hence, God takes her away from her idols, that she might be made sensible of her misery, her destitution, and her helplessness ; and lest she should return to her broken cisterns, and try again to deceive herself with the vanity of her own devices, he allures her and brings her, into the wilderness—into circumstances of solitude and of desolation, where there are no refuges of lies to which she can betake herself, and no fountains from which she can draw water—where she is made to feel that there is nothing between her and God, and is therefore in the very circumstances for realising her abject wretchedness, and listening, with an attentive ear, and with an open heart, to the message of God, when he applies the consolations of his Spirit, and speaks comfortably unto her.

This brings us to the next clause. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence ;" that is, I will give her her vineyards from or in the wilderness. A wilderness is not the place which seems most suitable for vineyards. It is the very last place where we would expect to find them. The vine, indeed, is an exceedingly tender plant. It requires the influence of a genial climate ; it stands in need of the culture of a careful husbandman ; it is capable of being easily destroyed ; nevertheless, God promises to his people a place of vineyards, a place of fruitfulness, a place of spiritual abundance, a place of reviving consolations—not amid the enclosures of some beautiful garden, abounding in fountains of living water, subjected to the process of a constant cultivation, and rejoicing in all the advantages of a genial climate and a fruitful soil—but even amid the solitudes of the waste howling wilderness. In other words,

God has provided comfort for his people where least of all it might have been expected, and in circumstances apparently the most desolate. Amid trials outwardly the most overwhelming he can bring them to the source of the sweetest consolation, converting their afflictions into their richest mercies, and, by the lifting up of the light of his own countenance, scattering all clouds and all darkness, and causing the very wilderness to shine—the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

But observe, still farther, God promises to give to his people “the valley of Achor for a door of hope.” The valley of Achor signifies the valley of trouble—the place where the Israelites were punished for the accursed thing which was hid in the tent of Achan—a place, therefore, by no means congenial to the desires or the inclinations of their own hearts—a place of grief, remote from all sensible enjoyments, where the soul, suffering from the chastisements of the Almighty, is brought into the depths of the lowest distress—a valley of pits, and of snares, and of fearful conflicts, and of the dark shadows of death. Yet even this valley of Achor was a part of the land of Canaan, the land promised to Abraham and to his seed; and though, for a season, it was turned into a place of correction or of punishment, yet it was not the eternal, unmitigable punishment, under the burden of the infliction of which there can be no hope. It was the discipline, rather, that was designed to chasten and to purify, not to hurt or to destroy. Hence, even in the valley of Achor, where their feet are so ready to stumble, and their hearts so apt to be cast down within them, God engages to his people to open up a door of hope—a door of hope which lets in floods of brilliant light upon the darkness, and turns the shadows of death into the dawning of the morning—a door of hope leading into the vast field of God’s most precious promises, where there are fountains of living water bursting from the rocks of the wilderness, leaves dropping in their fragrancy from the trees of immortality that are growing in the paradise above, and living streams from the rivers of everlasting pleasure that are flowing from the throne of God—a door of hope opened through the dark clouds into the serene and radiant glories of the land that is afar off, where the eye of faith, even now, can discover bright glimpses of the far more exceeding and everlasting weight of glory, and by which the soul shall ere long escape from the troubles of this fallen world, and from the feebleness of a desponding spirit, and from the encumbrances of a body of disease and of death, and walk at large and at liberty, amid those regions of pure and everlasting blessedness, where the saints of God shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; where the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat, but where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them unto fountains of living water, and where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

And, finally, our attention is pointed in the passage before us to the result of all this gracious procedure on the part of God, in alluring his people into the wilderness, and there giving them a place of vineyards, and in bringing them into the valley of Achor, and there opening up before them the door of hope. They were to be filled with the plenitude of consolation ; they were to forget the days of their former sorrow ; they were to sing there, as in the days of their youth, and as in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt. These assuredly were blessed days—the days of their youth ! These are connected with delightful associations. There is then a freshness of feeling—a lightness and elasticity of spirit—which no language can describe. They leave impressions on the heart which can never be effaced ; the memory of them in advancing years is very pleasant. And the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt ! That also was a memorable day, associated with happy recollections, and deserving to be held in everlasting remembrance. It was the day of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, when they escaped from the tyranny of their oppressors, and when the Lord brought them out with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, himself going before them, guiding them with the pillar of cloud by day, and with the pillar of fire by night—guarding them with the shield of his Almighty protection, and executing upon all their enemies the vengeance of his righteous judgments. When, therefore, it is said in the passage before us, that they were to sing there as in the days of their youth, and as in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt, it seems very emphatically to express that their experience was to be of the most joyful description—that their bygone sorrows and troubles were to be forgotten—that theirs was to be the joy that was unspeakable and full of glory ; and so it cannot fail to be whenever the comfortable presence of God is realised. If his presence be with us, it matters not where we go—all will be well. And whatever be our outward circumstances, or however great the pressure of our trials, he will give us, even in the wilderness, a place of vineyards, and open, in the valley of Achor, a door of hope, that we may sing there as in the days of our youth.

Men and brethren, there are many of you whom God in times past has been pleased to bring through great and overwhelming troubles—troubles that have made a deep impression on your minds, and brought a cloud of darkness over all your prospects, and dried up the fountain of your sweetest enjoyments, and led you into a dark and desolate wilderness, where you almost refused to be comforted. We trust, however, that the course of events, in conjunction with the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, has dissipated the dark clouds, while it has turned the wilderness into a place of vineyards, and the valley of trouble into a door of hope—

putting a new song into your mouths, and causing you to sing there as in the days of your youth.

And we trust that this will be the result of God's providential dealing with us, not as individuals only, but in our corporate capacity as a Church. In that point of view, also, we are now led, as it were, into the wilderness, and into the valley of trouble. We are summoned to contend with present difficulties, and in the view of many there may be heavy trials, and dark prospects before us. These, no doubt, are to be regarded as a punishment for past sins—for the misimprovement of distinguished privileges, the violation of sacred engagements, the abuse of religious ordinances, the neglect of opportunities of usefulness, the despoite which we have been doing to the Spirit of all grace. Yet there is nothing discouraging in the simple fact of our being subjected to the chastisements of Almighty God. It would have been infinitely worse for us, and indicated a far more hopeless condition, if we had been left alone, given up to our idols, permitted to settle upon our lees, or abandoned to the insensibility of a reprobate state of mind. It is good to be afflicted—good to be brought into the wilderness—good to be led into the valley of Achor—if so be that our afflictions are sanctified, our idols abandoned, our corruptions acknowledged, our sins repented of, our backslidings healed, and our wandering feet and our erring souls brought back again unto Him from whom we have revolted. In that case, we shall have no occasion to mourn over our altered circumstances, or to look back with bitterness of regret to the external privileges we have left behind. If the presence of God be with us, and that presence be vividly realised, he will turn the very wilderness into a place of vineyards, and open up in the valley of Achor a door of hope, and cause us to sing there as in the days of our youth.

The circumstances, dear friends, in which you have met here this day are peculiar, and they are very solemnising. You have turned away, with deep and sorrowful emotions, from the venerated sanctuary, whose paths in times past have been worn with the feet of many worshippers, which stands connected in the minds of many of you with your earliest and most hallowed recollections, and around which is the place your fathers' sepulchres, the depository of the dust of the departed members of your broken families; and with eager steps, and with firm purpose of mind, you have passed through the gates of another sanctuary, where almost everything that the eye rests upon wears a different aspect, and awakens in the innermost recesses of the spirit a new train of associations. And whether you dwell on the solemn spectacle which your eyes have this day witnessed, or steal away back to the memory of other days, it is scarce possible to exclude from the mind the influence of many

sad and overwhelming thoughts, more especially as the circumstances which have brought you hither have led to separations amongst brethren, and to divisions amongst the members of the same families, which are almost as painful, and scarce less difficult to be borne, than the ravages of death, or the pangs of actual bereavement.

Nevertheless, by the steps you have this day taken, you have borne your solemn and emphatic testimony in favour of the great principles for which the Church of Scotland has been contending, and for the sake of which so many of her ministers have counted it an honour and a privilege to sacrifice their worldly all. I trust that none of you will ever have occasion to regret the day when this momentous step has been taken, and that, whatever anxieties, whatever difficulties some of you have experienced hitherto, that now the decisive act has been done, the presence of the Divine Redeemer will be with you, and that, in the serenity of a peaceful conscience, and in the consolations of the Holy Spirit, and in a more abundant blessing on the ordinances of the sanctuary, the tokens of God's gracious approval will not be withheld.

For myself, I feel grateful to Almighty God, that so many now before me have been enabled, notwithstanding of the fear of man which bringeth a snare, to act so decided and so independent a part; and that here, as in other places, multitudes of the best conditioned and the most religious portion of the community have not been awanting to protest against the corruptions and the encroachments by which the rights and liberties of the Church of Scotland have been so grievously invaded, and to add to the many testimonies which have already been lifted up, through all the length and breadth of the land, in behalf of the crown rights of the glorified Redeemer.

These testimonies, indeed, are of various kinds, and many of them, though silent testimonies, are as emphatic as if they had been lifted up with a loud and audible voice. There is a testimony—a silent testimony—in the wild luxuriance of an uncultivated garden—where beautiful flowers, under the genial influences of heaven, are lifting their fragile forms, and displaying their hues of loveliness, and sending forth their balmy fragrancy, even amid the rank and noisome weeds that are growing everywhere around them. There is a testimony—a silent testimony—in the aspect of an empty and deserted dwelling—the furniture removed, the shutters closed, the fire extinguished, the doors locked, the inmates gone, and all voice of joy and of melody hushed as into the stillness of the grave. There is a testimony—a silent testimony—in the spectacle of an unfrequented sanctuary—a sanctuary abandoned by its minister, abandoned by its elders, abandoned by the great body of the people—the seats forsaken, the bibles removed, the living congregation



gone, the place left desolate. These are silent testimonies—but they are possessed of solemn and stupendous power. They bespeak the operation of feelings and of principles which are lodged in the profoundest depths of men's spirits, and are unquestionably the harbingers of a religious movement, which may be felt for ages and for generations to come, and the issue of which no man can tell.

Men, indeed, there may be found, who may still continue to talk lightly of these things, as if they were scarce deserving of any serious consideration—as if all would subside again, and that speedily, into silence and forgetfulness. That, however, we think to be impossible. The principles at issue are too momentous to warrant such a result. The movement, we verily believe, is only beginning, and will continue, we doubt not, to be carried on till Christ's glorious kingdom shall be established, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

Meanwhile, let all of you who have given in your adherence to the great principles in question, and who have joined together in the lifting up of an emphatic testimony for the crown rights of the Divine Redeemer, be persuaded and encouraged, in dependence on the grace of God's Holy Spirit, to cleave unto the Lord wholly, and to follow out your testimony to all its appropriate and legitimate results. You have acknowledged the Headship and supremacy of Christ over his own Church, when viewed in the light of a vast community—see also that you acknowledge the Headship and supremacy of Christ over yourselves, when viewed as the individual members of his body. Acknowledge him in every duty, in every privilege, in every ordinance, in every trial—in all the relationships of life, as parents, as children, as masters, as servants, as husbands, as wives—whether you be young or old, whether you be rich or poor, whether you be learned or illiterate—at all times, in all circumstances, in all places, in the family, in the world, in the church. And if you thus acknowledge him as your supreme Head, rest assured that he will acknowledge you as the members of his body, and keep you as the apple of his eye, and preserve you in the hollow of his hand, and shelter you beneath the covert of his wings, and make all things to work together for your good. And though he may lead you into the wilderness and into the valley of trouble, he himself will go with you to turn the wilderness into a place of vineyards, and to open in the valley of Achor a door of hope, that you may sing there as in the days of your youth.

## SERMON XIX.

REASONS WHY MEN REJECT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

BY THE REV. JAMES HAMILTON, LONDON.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth these things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—ROMANS x. 1-9.

THE position of the Apostle Paul was a very affecting one. He was in plenary possession of the great saving truth. The plan of a sinner's acceptance with God had been made so plain to him that he had no difficulty in comprehending it; and he saw such a Divine glory in it that he had no hesitation in taking advantage of it. He not only knew what he must do to be saved, but he knew that he was saved already. He sat in heavenly places with Jesus Christ, and had no more doubt of his final and eternal blessedness, than he had doubt of his Saviour's present love. So far as his personal salvation went, he had nothing to give him uneasiness or gloom. The controversy between God and himself was all settled. He had submitted to that alternative which involves forgiveness. He had submitted to the righteousness of God, and was persuaded that nothing could separate him from the love of God. And on such a serene elevation of personal assurance, you would think that it could not be easy to agitate his bosom, or mar his blessedness.

To an unselfish mind personal security is not always perfect felicity. Suppose that a man has found refuge in a fortress, on the alarm of a sudden invasion, but has not succeeded in carrying all his kindred with him; the first emotion, as he looks over the parapet and realises the commanding position of the castle, will likely be assurance, exultation, gratitude. He looks proudly from the towering precipice, which no ladder will ever scale, and rejoices in those walls of living rock which will shake the bullets harmless from their granite ribs, and is thankful that he has found such a refuge. But, alas! out on the open plain he descries a brother who

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has thus far escaped, but who, by some infatuation, is running past the castle gate; and though he shouts and makes signals, and at last catches his eye, and points him to the proper entrance, there is some illusion in the case; for the poor fellow shakes his head, and, leaving the gate behind him, passes round in quest of some other inlet. In such a case, the brother saved, because he knew the impregnable security of the stronghold, and knew so well the narrow gate by which himself got in, would only eye with the more lacerating anguish the wilfulness of that dear brother, who, as the foe drew nearer, was fleeing farther and farther from the door of safety. This was the Apostle's situation. He had found the refuge. He was looking over the ramparts of salvation—looking down from the rock of Immanuel's righteousness, a saved, and, so far, a happy man. Satan, a guilty conscience, a broken law, were all beneath him, and for himself he had now no fear. But there—out upon the plains of wrath—in the open field of danger—were his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. And though many of them were anxious for salvation, and fleeing from the wrath to come, some blindness had happened to them, for scarcely one of them made for the door of hope; and though, in the fulness of his fraternal affection, he had lifted up his voice, and, with loud cries and many tears, directed them to the open door, scarce one believed his report. This was the reason for his trepidation. He himself was safe; but, to see his personal friends, and his beloved countrymen, one by one borne down by their great destroyer, when all his urgency was to them the drivel of one who dreamed, this pierced him to the heart—this made him, on the high places of an absolute assurance, still a man of sorrows. "I am persuaded that nothing can separate *me* from the love of God; but oh! this great heaviness and continual heart-sorrow for Israel—my brethren, my kinsmen!"

In this chapter he adds another reason for his sorrow. It was not merely his patriotic love of his countrymen, and his personal tenderness for those of them who were his own intimate friends and near relations, but it was his respect for the motives and character of many among them. Like the young man whom Jesus loved, some of them seemed not far from the kingdom of heaven. It was not as if they were Atheists, or Infidels, or scoffers, or loose profligates. They were not Atheists; they had a zeal of God. They were not Infidels; they believed in Moses and the prophets. They were not scoffers; for they were extremely anxious to make their salvation sure. And they were not reprobates or libertines; for they had a great regard for the law, and a real anxiety to establish a righteousness for themselves. Their chief objection to the Gospel was, that they imagined it inconsistent with the law, and dishonouring to the character of God. And as this objection was sincerely

felt by many, and indicated a certain zeal for God—though not a godly zeal—though a very erroneous and disastrous zeal—the Apostle made full allowance for their prejudice, while he grieved over it. They were all the more interesting because of their earnestness, and all the more in danger because so earnest in error. “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

Now, my dear friends, it would be a matter of mere historic curiosity to investigate the reasons which led the Jews, eighteen hundred years ago, to reject God’s plan of salvation, if there were nothing parallel to it now-a-days. But, unhappily, the very same thing which wrung the Apostle’s heart, is still going on in the world. Multitudes of people, including some of remarkable amiability—some of blameless outward character—some staunch members of Christian Churches—and some who are the beloved friends of Christian men, the fac-similes of these zealous, and orthodox, and interesting Jews, who were so dear to the Apostle—are falling short of heaven, for the same reasons which proved so fatal in the days of Paul. It is a subject on which we feel painfully anxious. Our time is stealing away, and we are fast taking leave of the doctrinal portion of that epistle which most fully explains God’s method of justifying the ungodly. We have endeavoured, every time the subject recurred, to make the matter as plain as we possibly could. We hope that we have in some measure succeeded, and that those at least who knew the Gospel plan beforehand, have recognised it in these lectures. But, notwithstanding the obliging patience with which you have listened, we dare not flatter ourselves that all have understood or believed the report. And at this late stage of our progress, we trust it may be useful to mention some of the causes why, with an attainable salvation before them, so many earnest and respectable characters come short of eternal life.

I. Ignorance of God’s righteousness. Many of these Israelites did not comprehend the righteousness of God. It is the glory of heaven that there is nothing unholy there. And whether they be the natives of the place, or the denizens that have been gathered in from afar, no one remains in it, and no one finds entrance to it, who is not perfectly righteous. The flaming gates of old Eden did not more effectually exclude pollution than the holy gates of heaven do. It is their peculiarity and their glory, that imperfection cannot pass through them. A perfect righteousness is the only passport into the presence of a holy God. This is right. It is right that the palace of the great King should be pure as he himself is pure. It is right that no trace nor token of the abominable

thing which he hates—no symptom of sin—should be detected in the place where his glory dwells. And we can easily conceive, that there are worlds whose innocent inhabitants are admitted in virtue of their own innocence—worlds, whose spotless citizens, when their season of sojourn elsewhere is ended, have only to appear at the pearly gates, and they forthwith lift up their heads, and let the righteous nation enter. But this world of ours contains no righteous resident. There is no such thing on earth as a spotless soul. The only real righteousness now extant upon earth is a righteousness which came down from heaven. The Word was made flesh. God dwelt with man. In the guise of frail mortality, Jehovah's Fellow and his own dear Son obeyed each precept of the law, and fulfilled all righteousness. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and his bitter sorrows were ample satisfaction for those sins. His blood cleanseth from all sin, for it is precious blood—blood Divine. But it is not enough that guilt be cancelled. The rebel's attainder may be removed, but he may not be restored to his place beside the sovereign's person, nor put anew in his patrimonial possessions. The sentence of condemnation may be removed, and yet there may not be the shadow of a claim to any recompense. A creature may be cleansed from the pollution of actual sin, and remain in all the insipidity and unattractiveness of no positive righteousness. Now, herein consists the completeness of the great redemption. During the thirty years which preceded his directly expiatory work, the sinner's Representative was living a life of vicarious obedience. He was obeying those commandments which we should have obeyed, and fulfilling that righteousness which we should have fulfilled. During the three years of his public ministry, and during the thirty years that went before it, he came in contact with the law in all its breadth, and obeyed it in all its strictness. Year by year he was accumulating that merit which he needed not for himself, but which, he knew, was needful for every one that would enter heaven. And, in order to account for those unregistered and unknown years which elapsed between his birth and baptism, you must remember that the Saviour was then going about a most important part of his Mediatorial work,—that he was *obeying* in his people's stead, just as afterwards he *suffered* in their stead—that the Child Jesus was then doing what the law of God requires that every child should do, and what will be counted the obedience of every child that belongs to Jesus—that the Man Christ was doing what every son of Adam should have done, and what will be counted the obedience of every man who believes in Jesus. He meted out to himself the average measure of mortal days. He accomplished the years which go to a common generation, and filled up all these years with a rich and redundant obedience—an obedience which covered either table

and touched every tittle of the law—an obedience which he needed not for himself; for, in virtue of his intrinsic Deity, all things were already His which obedience can earn—but an obedience by which the law was infinitely honoured, and with which the Godhead was infinitely well pleased—for it was an obedience Divine. Now, observe, these two things go together; so to speak, the neutralizing and the positive ingredients make up one righteousness. The sin-cancelling atonement and the heaven-claiming merit—the sufferings which shut the sinner's hell, and the obedience which opened the ransomed sinner's heaven—the sweet-smelling sacrifice and the delightful doing of God's will—these two ingredients together form the righteousness of Christ—that righteousness which Jesus wrought out for the rebellious, and left on earth for their behoof. The Divine blood which obliterates guilt, and the Divine obedience which beautifies the soul, go together and make up the righteousness of Christ—that righteousness which the Son of God elaborated when here on earth, and which, in his gospel, he offers to the acceptance of every one. But Christ was God. He who was found in fashion of a man was the great and mighty God. His obedience had a Divine virtue in it; it had all the weight which his Godhead could give it. His sufferings had a Divine virtue in them; they had all the solemnity and sanction which his Godhead could give them. And, therefore, his Divine obedience to the law, and his Divine satisfaction for sin, are called “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.”

Now, many are ignorant of the existence of such a righteousness. Many a well-educated and accomplished man is not aware, that there exists on earth a righteousness which God himself wrought out. Many are not aware that the gospel is just the vehicle for carrying from door to door, and offering to each sinner's acceptance, a righteousness, Divine in its origin, Divine in its elaboration, and Divine in its ever-during acceptability. This righteousness which Jesus wrought out, which the gospel reveals—which he who runneth may read, and which any rebel may receive—is so hid in its notoriety, is so puzzling in its plainness, is so overlooked in its studious obviousness, that we have often conversed with people who, in their anxiety after acceptance with God, would have given all that they had for the least scrap of unquestionable merit—for the minutest atom of actual holiness—who would have caught at the righteousness of Adam, had that been within their reach—who would have thought themselves all too happy if they could have made an angel's righteousness their own—but who never dreamed that the righteousness of God—neither Adam's righteousness, nor an angel's righteousness, but God's own righteousness—was that which they might appropriate and present as their own. We have heard of learned scholars who could speak

many tongues, and tell the force of every idiom in tongues no longer spoken, but who did not know the meaning of that Hebrew word, *Jehovah Tsdkenu*. We have known accurate chronologists who could tell most of the remarkable incidents which have been evolved in this world's history, and could give the date of the most memorable discoveries, but who could not tell the year which "brought in everlasting righteousness." (Dan. ix. 24.) And we have listened to acute reasoners, and profound metaphysicians, who could discourse eloquently on the powers and capabilities of human nature; and we have heard high-souled moralists, who described, with poetic fervour, the beauty of true virtue; and divines, of whom the Apostle would assuredly have borne the record that they had a zeal of God, but who seemed never to have adverted to that righteousness, which alone the Apostle deemed worthy of the name, even "the righteousness which is of God by faith."

II. However, some are aware that such a righteousness exists, who do not know how they are to benefit by it. They believe that Christ has wrought out a perfect righteousness, but they do not know how they themselves are to attain it and make its completeness their own. They say in their heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven? By what process of self-elevation shall I render myself worthy of this righteousness? Or who shall descend into the deep? How far must I sink in self-abasement—how humbled, and heart-broken, and penitent, must I become before I be in a fit state for God to show his mercy and impart this righteousness to me?" Now the righteousness of God is brought so near, that nothing which the sinner can do can bring it nearer. He might as soon ask if his services were needful to go up to heaven and prevail on the Saviour to undertake redemption (shall I ascend into heaven to bring Christ down from above?); or enquire, Is there anything I can do to promote the resurrection of the Saviour (can I descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from the dead?)—he might as soon ask, Can I do anything to aid Christ in working out this righteousness? as ask, Can I do anything to earn a right to it, now that Christ has wrought it out? The whole design of the incarnation and atonement, was to bring salvation into the homes of men. The Lord Jesus did not purchase pardon for the rebellious and then deposit it in some far island of the sea, so that it would be needful to descend into the deep—to undertake a tedious voyage and hazardous life-venture in order to arrive at it. Nor did he perch it on some cloud of the upper firmament, so as to rack the anxious invention in finding out the aërostation which would soar up to it, or the spell which would charm it down. And yet the intricacy of system has conveyed some such idea to many minds. You may perfectly perceive

that the righteousness of Jesus is the righteousness of God ; but you may imagine that between that righteousness and you, there stretches a great "deep" or a greater "height." You may fancy that faith, or believing, or repentance, or something of that sort, is the ship which you need to float you over this abyss, or the wings you need to waft you up to the airy elevation where this righteousness dwells. And here is the subtlety of self-righteousness, or, what is the same thing, here is the voice of fallen nature. Unable to realize the gratuitousness of Divine forgiveness, if not allowed an active part in working out the great redemption, the soul would like to *do* something to make that great redemption its own. The soul would like, by making the preliminary process as painful and tedious as possible, to introduce a sort of post-humous merit of its own, and, eventually accepting Jesus as its peace with God, still to come at this peace by a preface of its own repentance. But all this is illusory ; natural, and therefore wrong. The righteousness is not only wrought out, but brought near—so near that not a moment of time nor a point of space intervenes between you and its present possession—so near, that it requires no flight of fancy to comprehend it—no knack of thinking nor sleight of ingenuity to arrive at it—no will-worship nor voluntary humility to propitiate it. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth." If you have such affection for the Lord Jesus as to confess him before men, and this you will have if you really believe that God has raised him from the dead as your Redeemer—"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If you have that reliance on the work of Christ that you can confide your salvation entirely to him, you are saved already.

Perhaps the following narrative may enable our younger friends to understand it better. A certain king prepared a sumptuous banquet in honour of his son. The first invitations were issued to the nobles of the land, and sundry families, who had long been favourites with the prince. But the banqueting hour arrived and did not bring them. A sulky fit had seized them—and, as if by combination, they all remained away. But the king was resolved that his munificence should not be lost, nor the honour intended for his son defeated. And, as all the people round about were alike his subjects, he said to his servants, "The feast is ready, but none of the guests are come. Go out into the highways and hedges, and bring in all you can find." The servants went, and great surprise there was when they told their errand. One poor labourer was returning from his work, and after toiling all day had got no wages from the man who hired him, and was trudging wearily home to his empty cupboard—when the king's messenger accosted him,



and told that a feast was prepared for him. After the first gaze of incredulity, seeing by his uniform that he was the king's servant, and really in earnest, the poor labourer turned his steps towards the palace. The next was a cripple, who sat by the wayside begging. He had gathered little that day, when the messenger told him he would find a feast at the palace, and the king desired to see him. He had heard that something remarkable was going on at the court, and that the king was giving an entertainment in honour of some special event in his son's history; and though he scarcely expected anything more than a ration of bread and wine at the gate, as he knew that the king was of a very sumptuous and gracious disposition, he did not hesitate, but raised himself on his crutches, got up and hobbled away. Then the messenger came to a shady lane, down which a retired old gentleman lived on a small spot of ground of his own. The messenger had far more trouble with him. It was not so much that he questioned the message, or that he did not like the invitation, but that he was annoyed at its abruptness and his own want of preparedness. He asked if there were to be no more invitations issued next week, or if there were no possibility of postponing the visit till the following evening; for, considering his station in society, he would like to appear in his best, and could have been glad of a little leisure to get all things in order. "However, said the messenger, you know the custom of our court—the king provides the robes of state—all things are ready, come away;" and as he posted on, the old householder thought that rather than run any risk, he had better go at once—though some noticed that as he passed along he occasionally eyed his thread-bare garment with a look that seemed to say, he could have put on better, had longer time been allowed him. Then at the palace it was interesting to see how the different parties acted. According to the custom of that country, and more especially after the magnificent manner of that king, each guest was furnished on his arrival with a gorgeous robe. They were all alike, exceeding rich and costly; and the moment he came up one was handed to each new-comer, and he put it on and passed in to the dazzling banquet-hall. Some awkward persons, who did not know the usage of the place, and who had carried with them the mean notions which they learned among the highways and hedges, scrupled to receive these shining robes, and asked what price they must pay for them. And one individual was observed to come in with rather better attire than the most, and when offered a robe of the king's providing, he politely declined it, and stepped forward into the state-apartments. He was no sooner there than he rued his vanity—for his faded tinsel contrasted fearfully with the clothing of wrought gold in which the other guests

were arrayed. However, instead of going back to get it changed, he awaited the issue. All things were now ready—the folding-doors opened, and from chambers all-radiant with purest light, and redolent of sweetest odours, amidst a joyful train the king stepped in to see the guests. A frown for a moment darkened his majestic brow as he espied the presumptuous guest—but the intruder that instant vanished, and, with a benignity which awakened in every soul such a joy as it had never felt before—with a look which conferred nobility wherever it alighted, and a smile that awakened immortality in every bosom—he bade them welcome to the ivory palace, and told them to forget their father's house and their poor original, for he meant to make them princes every one, and as there were many mansions in the house they should there abide for ever.

You will observe that a welcome from the King depends entirely on having on, what the gospel parable calls, “a wedding robe.” This robe, according to the custom of old and eastern times, is provided by the lord of the house, and, as a matter of course, is put on every guest as he enters—of course, only if he be willing—but none who is willing need want it, for it is gratuitously given to all. That robe is righteousness—not man's, but Jehovah's—the righteousness of God's providing—that righteousness which is embodied in Christ Jesus, as it was wrought out by him—that righteousness which made Paul so careless about worldly calamities, and so disdainful of his own performances. (Phil. iii. 8, 9.) And, dear brethren, be persuaded—put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Say that you henceforth take your stand, not on what you yourself ever hope to be, but on what the Lord Jesus already is. Do not deny your own vileness, but, as you would ever be saved, do not deny his worthiness. Ye poor and blind! step in to the feast—ye halt and maimed! creep in. When at heaven's gate they ask in whose right you come, make mention of Jesus' righteousness, and the everlasting doors will open to receive you. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth; speak it out. Confess the Lord Jesus—believe that God hath raised him from the dead, and by raising him from the dead, has accepted him in the stead of sinners. Lay the stress of your salvation on that Redeemer whom God hath raised again, and whose righteousness God hath accepted already, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in Jesus, and in Jesus you are righteous. Avow your faith in him by the life and language of discipleship, and you serve yourself heir to his promise, “Him that confesseth me before men, will I confess before my Father and his holy angels.” “Submit to the righteousness of God.” *Submit* to enter heaven in another's name and in another's right. *Submit* to be saved without doing any great thing for yourself, but by the great things

which Jesus has done for you. The Lord has not bid you do some great thing, not even sent you to wash in Jordan seven times. Submit to wash in a better stream—once and for ever in the fountain opened, and see if your flesh do not come again like that of a little child—see if, believing in Jesus, you be not born again and brought into the kingdom of heaven. Submit to put on the wedding garment. The Holy Spirit offers you the robe of Christ's righteousness. Submit to put it on, and condescend, as you pass in to the marriage feast, to say,

Jesus! thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are and glorious dress.

III. And as there are many "ignorant of God's righteousness,"—ignorant of its existence, or of the way in which it becomes available for the sinner's justification,—so there are some who reject it from their anxiety "to establish their own righteousness." Here is the state of the case: "I have broken God's law times without number. I have gone astray from the very first, and every moment that I have lived a rebel is just another sin. Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and I am oppressed with a confused and heavy burden of various guilt. I see that the law is holy and just and good, and it would be a real satisfaction to myself if I could do anything to atone for my terrible transgressions. I see that it is only right that the sinner should suffer—that a law so majestic should receive for every violation some suitable redress; and, in my present state of mind, I would fain offer any amends I could. To take a pilgrimage would be a pleasure—to punish the flesh by any privations is the revenge which I fain would inflict; and if you could only prescribe what I should do—if it were only revealed from heaven how many prayers I should offer, how many fasts I should keep, how much of my substance I should give away, as a sort of atonement for the past, I am sure I would grudge no self-denial, no sacrifice. To be relieved from this present wretchedness—to be rid of this haunting incubus of an harassing conscience—to find extrication from that sense of vileness and pollution and worthlessness which presently oppresses me, there is nothing that I would not gladly do; and, so as it would give me a healthy feeling of self-respect, or a firm footing of confidence towards God, I declare I could give all my goods to feed the poor; and, so as it would only consume corruption, and purify my soul, I sometimes think I could give my body to be burned." When to a soul so convinced of sin, you say, "Believe and live,—accept the righteousness of God and nothing more is needed,"—the simplicity of the prescription is almost provoking. The soul wants to do some great thing. It wants to make some magnificent amendment—some august and severe satisfaction to the injured law. It wants to pass into the presence of an offended God through the refining

ordeal of some fiery trial, or to reach at last his propitious eye, after the sighs and self-reproaches, and flesh-wasting macerations of a long and penitential pilgrimage. And to be told that there is but a step betwixt the soul and the large and wealthy place of peace with God—to be told that all which the wistfulness of awakened conscience can suggest, and the indignation of self-revenge can inflict, does not promote the desired result in the smallest degree, is distasteful and displeasing intelligence. The brevity of the process is just the thing which a convicted conscience cannot brook. There seems an utter inadequacy betwixt the stupendousness of guilt and the simplicity of faith. When the soul wants to *do* something, it does not like to be bidden to *accept* something; and when all its energies are intent on some great work of personal expiation, the declaration, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, is righteousness counted,” is a blank and baffling announcement. Bent on establishing a righteousness of its own, it is not easy to “submit to the righteousness of God.”

In this state of mind, there is a just feeling, and there is also a strong delusion. It is a just feeling that the law should be vindicated. It is right that sin should never pass unnoticed. It is only proper and worthy of a holy God, that your sin should receive its commensurate punishment. But it is a delusion to imagine that a sinner can atone for sin. It is a delusion to think that twenty days of repentance, or twenty years of amendment, can cancel that sin of which God has declared the proper penalty to be an everlasting death. It is a delusion to suppose that a sinful repentance, sinful tears, sinful prayers, sinful resolutions, can obliterate the smallest sin. But the greatest delusion of all is to think that you are wiser than God, or mightier than the Son of God. But you do think yourself wiser than God when you prefer your plan to his—when you think that it is more for the honour of the law that the sinner should suffer in his own person rather than in the person of a Divine substitute. And you do think yourself mightier than Immanuel, if you think your work more perfect than his—if you think your repentance magnifies the law more than his obedience did—if you think that his “one offering” has not so perfected his redeemed, but that you must add your own efforts to it—if you think that Christ is not so truly “the end of the law,” not so completely the bearer of its curse, the fulfiller of its demands, the vindicator of its authority, and the embodiment of all its excellence, but that it needs something more than union with Christ to give you an absolute righteousness (ver. 4). And if you really saw the law in its majesty, and the work of Christ in its corresponding majesty, you would see that the only way to do the law true honour would be to do as the Gospel directs. Over against the law’s demands set his obedi-

ence—over against your sins set his one sacrifice. In other words, take the instant benefit of the righteousness of God, by presenting it to the law as that which is in the highest sense its “end.” Believe in Christ, who is the end of the law, and you are righteous in him.

IV. But perhaps you fear lest so free and prompt a forgiveness should be fatal to future obedience. You find, by your experience among your fellow-men, that a pardon too easily obtained is very apt to be abused, and that nothing is more likely to encourage renewed offences than a premature receiving of the offender back into favour. And you fear lest this scheme of gratuitous and instant forgiveness should encourage men to sin, because grace is so abundant. It might be remarked, towards removing this difficulty, that the Gospel pardon, though so prompt and free to the sinner, is not a cheap nor easy pardon to Him who first of all procured it; and, owing to the darkness of the human understanding, and the perversity of the human will, it is seldom too suddenly or lightly attained by the sinner who eventually finds it his own. And it might be farther remarked, that, in point of fact, the noblest patterns of piety, and most finished specimens of personal worth, are the men who counted their own excellence the merest dross, and yet felt assured that, for another's sake, they were precious in God's sight. And I think it might be commended to reason, that *real obedience begins only where slavish terror ends*, and that *the principle most prolific of loyalty and unwearied services is love*. The days of “the pedant's iron rule” are over, but while they lasted this truth was constantly illustrated. The trembling school-boy, who hardly dared to lift his eyes higher than the shoe-latchet of his angry master, did as little for that master's sake as truancy could possibly evade. But at home, where parental love prescribed the task, and a father's embrace or a mother's smile rewarded the well-learned lesson, in place of a sulky homage and a slow compliance, there was no limit to the diligence. Or, to instance in another relation of life: The poor weary drudge of a Caffre chief, or the captive of an eastern despot, may do her husband's bidding, and do it sedulously and tremulously; but who could compare the heartless ministrations of domestic slavery with the affectionate assiduities, and ingenious anticipation of wishes, the graceful performance of daily duties, and the frequent self-forgetfulness, and the heroic sacrifices which ennoble the same relation in happier lands? The Gospel employs either parallel to exemplify the difference between the obedience of legal servility and the obedience of evangelical love. “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ”—the stern and frowning disciplinarian from whose threatening voice we fly, now that our Gospel holiday is come to the bosom of our home, to that Father

whose commands are a kindness, and whom to serve is a rich reward. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." The days of your bondage are ended; your subjection to that angry despotic law is dissolved by death; you have now found another home; you are made one with Him who was raised from the dead; the Saviour and yourself are one; none else has any claim upon you; and what you henceforth do, you do for Jesus' sake.

But the gospel does not leave us to analogous presumption, for experimental inferences on a point so momentous. It puts the matter beyond all question by its express declarations. It assures us that the faith which receives the Saviour is the first step of new obedience—that the moment when God's righteousness is accepted is the moment when morality begins. The Holy Spirit is the author of all works truly good, and it is only when Christ is put on that the Holy Spirit is put within. It is only when Jesus is glorified that the Holy Ghost is given. It is not till a man is "in Christ Jesus" that he "walks not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And should there be any one here present anxious to attain a singular conformity to the law of God, his true and only plan is, to begin by accepting the righteousness of God. The more humbly and thankfully he submits to that righteousness, the more richly will the Spirit of Jesus dwell in him, and the more he rejoices in Christ as his Saviour, the more will he be conformed to Christ as his pattern. And the more speedily a man leaves off the establishing of his own righteousness, and submits to the righteousness of God, the sooner will the results of reconciliation be seen in his filial spirit, his quick and cordial obedience, his elevated and hopeful walk, and his broad and hearty "respect unto all God's commandments."

V. Another reason why some earnest seekers miss salvation is, that they go too far to find it. This is a world where signal blessings or great marvels seldom alight on your very threshold. Amidst all our pride we have a lurking suspicion that our roof is not worthy that any very distinguished guest should come under it, and that our house is not the most natural and appropriate place for any amazing mercy to come down upon. Hence, when we hear that remarkable tidings are abroad, we are ready to put our hand behind our ear to listen for some far-off proclamation; or, if a great sight be announced, we raise the telescope to our eye—for we do not think that they have come to our door. This deep-seated principle of human nature was curiously exemplified in a circumstance which happened years ago. There was a small colony planted on a creek of a vast continent. Their soil was very fertile, but

its limits were somewhat narrow. However, its size and resources were sufficient for the inhabitants. We said that its limits were narrow. On the landward side it was enclosed by an amphitheatre of rocky mountains, so precipitous that nothing, save the white clouds and the dwindling eagle, could pass over them. On the other side, it looked out on the bulging expanse of the immeasurable main. At the time we speak of, a pestilence had broken out, which made fearful havoc all through the population. It was a dreadful disease, before whose touch the sturdiest manhood crumbled down, and the brightest beauty withered away. It was not long till two appalling discoveries were made. First, it was found that no one had escaped it; for, though some exhibited its virulence more fearfully than others, the little child in the cradle and the shepherd in the distant plain were smitten, as well as the grown people in the village streets; and next, the doctors declared that it was beyond their skill—they could do nothing for it. Just at the time the plague was raging worst, a stranger appeared and told them there was a cure. He said that there was a plant which healed this disorder, and he described it. He mentioned that it was a lowly plant, not conspicuous nor very arresting to the eye—that it had a red blossom and sweet-scented leaves, and a bruised-looking stem, and that it was ever-green. He told a number of other particulars regarding it, and, as he could not tarry longer at that time, he left a paper in which, he said, they would find a full description of it and directions how to find it. The tidings diffused considerable activity through the sickly colony. A plant of such efficacy deserved the most diligent search. Almost all agreed that it must be far away; but a discussion arose whether it lay beyond the cliffs or across the sea. Most thought the latter, and some set to work and built a ship, and when they had launched her, they christened her *Ecclesia*, and hoisted a red-cross flag, and sent round word that the fine ship *Ecclesia* was about to set sail in search of the famous plant, and all who wished to escape the plague, were invited to take passages in this good ship. A few others, however, thought that the ship was going the wrong way, and that they would have better success by trying to get over the cliffs. This was an arduous enterprize; for the precipices were beetling steep and extremely high. A few attempts were made to climb by ravines and gullies, which, however, ended in walls of glassy smoothness; and, after many weariful efforts, the climbers either grew dizzy and fell back, or allowed themselves to slide down again to the crumbling debris at the bottom. But others, more inventive, busied themselves constructing artificial wings and aerial engines of various kinds, *Imitatio Christi*, asceticism, penitential prayers, and such like; and some of them answered exceedingly well for a little, and rose so

high that their neighbours really thought they would reach the top; but, their getting a certain height, whether it was owing to the weakness of the materials, or a powerful current which they always met at a certain elevation, and which, by a sort of down-draught blew them back from the brow of the mountain, they uniformly found themselves again on the spot from which they first ascended. A long time had now passed on, and multitudes had died of the plague without any clearer views of the specific plant; when a poor sufferer who had already gone a fruitless expedition in the ship, and from the severity of his anguish was eager in trying every scheme, lay tossing on his bed. He got hold of a large paper-roll which lay on a shelf beside him. It was very dirty, and the ink was faded, but to while away the time he began to unfold it, and found from the beginning that it was the Book of the Balm of Gilead.\* He at once suspected that it was the book which the stranger had left so long ago, and wondered how they had suffered it to fall aside, and he had not read far till it told him that if he would only read on, it would put him on the way of finding the Plant of Renown. It gave a full description—many particulars of which he had never heard before—and as he advanced in his feverish earnestness, unrolling it fold by fold, and reading rapidly as he went along, hoping that it would tell him the very spot where he should look for it, he found the plant itself! There it lay in the heart of the long-neglected volume; and LUTHER's eye glistened as he read "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "But where is Christ to be found? Must I ascend the height or descend into the deep? Must I climb these cliffs or cross that sea? Oh! no. Christ is here—nigh me—God's present gift to me conveyed in the volume of this book. I see him. I accept him. I believe." From that moment Christ was Luther's righteousness; and in the flash of sudden joy with which he discovered the Lord his righteousness, though it did not so strike him at the moment, Luther's eternal life began.

The apologue has prematurely betrayed itself; but no matter, it is so historically true that it could not be hid. The cure for a plague-stricken dying world was long concealed in the Bible, till, led by the Spirit of God, Luther found it there. You have only to go where Luther went, and you will find it again. But so inveterate is the disposition to travel far, or do some great thing for the sake of some surpassing good, that few are content with a salvation which has already come to their house. Leaving their Bible behind them, they go to sea in the ship of a so-called apostolic church, or they make to themselves the wings of a mystic

\* Title of New Testament, and Matth. i. 1.



piety, and, by dint of *personal effort*, try to bring Christ down from above. But all their labour is futile. That only "Christ" who is the "end of the law" and the "sinner's righteousness," is in the Bible already, and as such is God's free gift to me—a gift unspeakable in its intrinsic value—unspeakable in the everlasting results which its acceptance involves—God-like in the freeness with which it is offered, and God-like in the nearness with which it is brought; but missed by many because so nigh, and rejected by others because so free.

## SERMON XX.

THOSE WHO ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ARE HEIRS OF LIFE.

BY THE REV. A. BORLAND PARKER,

FREE CHURCH, LESMAHAGO.

Now the just shall live by faith."—HEB. x. 38.

IN the beginning of this chapter the Apostle shows the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to make atonement for sin. "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." It was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away the iniquity of a guilty world. Seeing, then, that a nobler sacrifice was required to accomplish this important purpose, where was the sacrifice to be found? Not among the sons of men; for there was none which could procure remission of his own sin, far less atone for the sins of a brother. Not among creatures of a higher order—the angels and the cherubim of heaven—for every service they could render, every work they could perform, was owing as a matter of debt to the sovereign Ruler of the universe, and no part of their obedience could be put to the account of our fallen race. It was in vain that the woods of Lebanon might burn, and the cattle on a thousand hills be slain at the altar; or that rivers of oil might cover the earth, or clouds of incense darken the sky. Unavailing were the costliest oblations which sinners of mankind might present. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God accomplished by the sending of his own Son. Christ came into the world to be at once a priest and a victim. There is this difference, however, between the priesthood of our Saviour and that of the sons of Aaron—the latter, after ministering for a time, were removed by infirmity or death; the former, because he is the Son of God, continues a Priest for ever. He is a minister of that true tabernacle and sanctuary which the Lord hath pitched and not man. And there is this difference, also, between the victims presented under the law, and the sacrifice offered by our blessed Lord, that while the former merely removed the stain of ceremonial defilement—"sanctifying," as the Apostle tells us, "to the purifying of the flesh"—the latter is efficacious in cleansing

the conscience and purifying the heart ; and while the former served a temporary purpose, and were frequently repeated, the latter was offered once and once for all ; for, “ by his one offering, Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” We have now, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. We have an High Priest over the house of God who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who can communicate the supplies of grace and strength of which we stand in need, and who is able and willing to save to the very uttermost all who will come unto him. Fearful, indeed, will be the judgment of those who despise the overtures of reconciliation, who trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the everlasting covenant an unholy thing. If the despisers of Moses’ law perished without mercy, heavier far will be the doom of such as set at nought the blessed Jesus. The Apostle, in the context, makes a special allusion to the great fight of afflictions which his Hebrew brethren had already endured, partly; while they were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly while they became the companions of those who were so used. With manly fortitude and Christian patience, they sustained the various hardships to which they were subjected ; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better, even an enduring inheritance. St Paul exhorts them still to exhibit the same stedfastness—to hold by the profession they had made whatever consequences might ensue ; in a word, to persevere unto the end. The way might be rough—it was but short. The difficulties might be numerous—they would all be overcome. The storm might rage around them—but its fury would soon be spent ; or they would be removed to a peaceful habitation, where the howling of the winter wind would never reach their ear. “ For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

There is a slight transposition in the words of our text, which is warranted by the original Greek, and which, while it does not materially affect the meaning of the passage, appears to set it in a clearer light. We may read the text thus—“ The just by faith shall live.” The expression, “ the just by faith,” or he “ he who is justified by faith,” is descriptive of a child of God. You are aware that the term “ just” is of much larger comprehension in Scripture than it is in common language. The “ just,” or “ justified man,” is not merely a person who is equitable in all his dealings, and who maintains a character for honesty and rectitude, but one who has received by faith the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ—who has been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who has been led to seek those things that are above, where Christ

sitteth at the right hand of God. No one can be called "just" by nature, for we are all the children of disobedience, and prone to every evil work. Nor can we make ourselves just by any efforts of our own. "We may, indeed, exhibit the image of external decency of conduct; we may obtain a fair reputation among the men of the world; we may practice some of those specious virtues which are extolled by the breath of empty applause; and all the while the understanding may be darkened, the will perverted, and the heart hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is by faith alone the sinner becomes just—that faith by which he is enabled to receive and rest upon Christ in all his freeness and in all his fulness. His mind is illuminated with the knowledge of the glorious Gospel. He sees himself to be infinitely vile, and Christ to be infinitely worthy. He renounces at once and for ever all righteousness of his own, and seeks for, and lays hold of, the righteousness of his Redeemer. He casts aside the rent and tattered garment, and clothes himself with a robe which is pure and spotless. He is joined to Christ by a close and vital union. He is in Christ, and Christ is in him. He is righteous because Christ is righteous. He receives of His exhaustless fulness, and grace for grace. The words of our text are a quotation from the Prophet Habakkuk. In the passage referred to, the Prophet is describing the different dispositions of the Jews when they were threatened by the Chaldeans. Some would be lifted up in soul, and presumptuously trust in their own resources for deliverance from the invading foe, and it is implied that destruction would be *their* lot; while others would place dependence on God's promise, and look to Him alone for help, and thus would be preserved and "live." The same quotation occurs in the Epistle to the Romans (i. 17), where the Apostle argues that the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith was taught under the old dispensation as well as under the new. What, then, does the Apostle intimate in our text concerning the man who is just by faith—who is justified in Christ? Briefly this—"He shall live." But there is great fulness of meaning in the expression, as with the Divine blessing we will endeavour shortly to illustrate under two general points of view.

I. The justified man shall live in this world.

II. He shall live in the world to come.

I. *He shall live in this world.*—A man's outward condition forms no correct criterion, by which we may ascertain the measure of his acceptance with God, or the amount of sorrow or of joy which he inwardly feels. The possession of riches and honours does not necessarily imply that the

possessor is the favourite of heaven, or that he is peaceful and happy in his own mind. He may have all the world can give him of affluence and of earthly distinction—being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day—with a numerous train of attendants ever waiting to receive his commands, and ever ready to carry them into execution, and yet his bosom may be the seat of many a painful emotion; the existence of which is not once suspected by the gazing crowds who admire or who envy the pageantry by which he is surrounded. There is something which gold cannot purchase and power cannot procure—there is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. In the book of Psalms, we find the inspired penman frequently complaining of the prosperity of the wicked, and the privations and afflictions of the righteous. And unquestionably, when he makes this complaint, he is stating a fact which meets our observation in every age of the world's history. For though the "just," as in the cases of Joseph and David, have sometimes, in the course of providence, been exalted to the highest stations, having kingdoms subject to their sway; yet, for the most part, their lot is cast amid far different scenes. How often do we see the true Christian labouring under the pressure of poverty—struggling hard against the tide of adverse circumstances, and finding no respite from his incessant toils; rising early and sitting late that he may earn for himself and for his children a scanty and precarious subsistence. We see him with his care worn brow and his exhausted frame—a being on whom fortune never deigned to smile. Or if, in a higher sphere of society, he engages in the pursuits of business, "all things are against him," and every exertion which he makes proves painfully abortive. But in the midst of all these vicissitudes, he "lives," and his is a happy life. In the exercise of his renovated faculties, in communion with his God and Saviour, in the enjoyment of all the comforts attached to his spiritual existence, and with God's blessing on his humble means, he is happier than the man of the world when his corn and oil do most abound.

Again, behold the believer when he is stretched upon the bed of sickness. He may have his wearisome days and his sleepless nights; he may be filled with tossings to and fro—seeking rest but finding none. He may be exhausted by weakness, or racked by pain, yet "he lives." Though a dark cloud passes over him, his soul is serene. He submits to the rod, and him that hath appointed it. Or view him, when death hath visited his dwelling, and the desire of his eyes has been taken away with a stroke; when the wife of his bosom, or the child of his fondest hopes, or the mother who watched over his helpless infancy, is removed "to the land of forgetfulness." Grievous to his spirit is the wound, yet even for

that wound there is a healing balm. Over the grave of Christian relatives he is taught to mourn, not as others who have no hope, knowing that ‘as Jesus died and rose again, so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.’ The worldly man has no stay on which he can lean in the hour of sore domestic bereavement; and hence, we find, when his sensibilities are keen, he experiences on such an occasion a despairing brokenness of spirit, a desolation, and a dreariness which the man who lives by faith can never know.

Again, behold the Christian in the day of persecution. It is to this point the Apostle makes special allusion in the context. The early disciples of the blessed Jesus derived no worldly advantage from the profession of their faith in him; but, on the contrary, were thereby exposed to manifold inconveniences and hardships. The cross of Christ was the ensign, not of honour but of ignominy and reproach. “They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment.” Yet amid all the discouragements and dangers of their situation, these holy and devoted men—men of faith and men of prayer—experienced abundant and unfailling support, for their life was hid with Christ in God. The time was, in our land, when those who loved the Saviour and who honoured his name, met with the same harsh treatment as the Hebrew brethren to whom the Apostle refers. They were hunted like wild beasts on the mountains; and even to the caves and fastnesses of nature’s solitude, where they sought an asylum, they were followed by the fiends of persecution. Often they had no covering save the canopy of heaven, and no couch save the barren heath. At times, in their religious convocations in the open air, were they exposed to the war of the elements of nature, not so terrible to them as the wilder passions of infuriated bigots, which acknowledged no restraint, and were subject to no law. What supported those martyrs under all their trials? What enabled them to sustain the rage of their persecutors, and rise superior to the fear of torture and of death? It was faith in their Master—it was confidence in his promises—it was the felt experience of his gracious presence by which they lived and conquered. And, in one word, what in every age has supported the people of God under the pressure of calamity, or the prospect of a dying hour? Not certainly the remembrance of the good they had done, or the glory they had achieved—not the contemplation of their own merits, or their moral and intellectual attainments, but simply the inwrought principle of a living faith—that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

II. *The justified man shall live in the world to come.*—Faith, indeed,

is not the procuring cause of eternal life. The possession of faith gives us no absolute or inherent claim on the Almighty for the pardon of our sins and the acceptance of our persons. It is merely the instrument of our justification. It is the link that connects us with the Saviour, and, in virtue of this connection, we receive every privilege and blessing we enjoy. The burden of our transgressions is transferred to our glorious Surety, and the merit of his spotless righteousness is imputed to us. Christ is the source of comfort and of joy, and from this exhaustless fountain, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, are derived the streams which refresh the believer's soul. Eternal life is the purchase of the Saviour's sacrifice. It was to obtain this for his people that he submitted to death. Happy they who depend on that blessed Saviour, and who look for acceptance only through His blood. They shall live in the world to come. But what is the nature of that life they shall lead in the regions of immortality and bliss? Doubtless, it cannot be fully appreciated till the believer enter on its fruition. Eternity alone can reveal what God hath in store for them that love him. When the morning of the resurrection shall dawn, its hallowed light shall dissipate the darkness of the tomb, and the precious dust, which, through long ages, has slumbered there, will be reanimated by the power of Him who has "the keys of death and hell." Not, indeed, that the spirits of the just are cut off from the delightful service of their Master, and the blessed communications of His grace, in the interval between their removal from this world and the season of final judgment. At the hour of death they are made perfect in holiness, admitted to the immediate presence of their beloved Lord, and to the possession of that glory which He purchased for them by the shedding of his blood.

But this is only a part of their joy. They are described as waiting with patience for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies—when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God, neither shall corruption inherit incorruption; and, therefore, the incorruptible and immortal bodies of the saints shall not stand in need of those supplies of meat and of drink by which they are at present nourished. "They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." They shall no longer be racked by pain, or pinched by poverty, or corroded by care, or harrassed with the toils of business. No lowering clouds will darken the brightness of their sky; no raging tempest shall shake the place of their habitation; and no enemy shall ever be permitted to enter within

their peaceful domain. The remembrance of past woes will occasion no uneasiness. On the other hand, the trials and the difficulties, through which they have won their way to the heavenly Zion, will be gratefully brought to mind in connection with the beneficial consequences to which they have been subservient. The soldier, when he has been relieved of his public duties, and has retired to spend, in quietness and repose, the evening of his days, loves to recount the battles he has fought, and the toils and privations to which he was subjected, during the period of active service. Will not, then, the good soldier of the cross look back, with kindred feelings, on the scene of warfare through which he has passed? His toils are ended; his conflict is over! He has fought a good fight; he has kept the faith; and now, by the Master whom he served, is he rewarded with an incorruptible and unfading crown. Oh, this surely is life, to dwell in the presence of the Father, and enjoy the light of His countenance, and be made partakers of his holiness—to see with our own eyes that adorable Redeemer, who is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely—to have the free and unrestrained communication of that gracious Spirit, whose quickening energy reanimates the soul once dead in sin,—to have heaven for our home, and angels for our companions, and the glories of eternity for our permanent possession,—this is the only life that is worthy of the name.

If ye are desirous, brethren, to obtain this unfading felicity, seek now to be spiritually quickened. Delay not in repairing to the fountain of life. It is a small matter merely to attend the house of God, to avoid gross sin, and maintain outward decency of character and conduct. The statue may be as fair and symmetrical in its proportions as the most perfect human form, and yet it is cold and motionless, for no breath of life is there. He who has the form of godliness, without the power, is just as much devoid of spiritual life as the man whose eyes are glazed, and whose heart has ceased to beat, is destitute of the principle of natural existence. Our Saviour has emphatically said, “Unless a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Seek, then, brethren, to be reconciled unto God in the blood of the great atonement. Seek to be joined to the blessed Jesus in a bond which death can never break, and to have that faith which can alone support you under the toils of your mortal pilgrimage, and bring you safely and happily to its close.

To those, among you, brethren, who have entered at the strait gate, and are found in the narrow way,—to you I would say, Go forward, “The path of the just is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” You have chosen the good part which shall never be taken from you. “Stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong.” Seek to maintain a calm and thankful frame of mind amid



all the varied circumstances of your earthly career—in distress and sorrow as well as in prosperity and joy. Live in the exercise of a simple and child-like dependence on the promise of your heavenly Father. Remember the obligations under which you are laid to redeeming love, and look forward to the great recompense of reward, which Christ died to purchase and now lives to bestow. Let no difficulties, or dangers, or apprehension of worldly loss, deter you from the path of duty, or from bearing faithful allegiance to Him whom you feel honoured to call your Lord and Master. Truly, “ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.” “For yet a little while and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.” Every motive should urge you to persevere, for only he who endureth to the end shall be saved. “No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.” Now, the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him.—

AMEN

## SERMON XXI.

THE UNIVERSAL CALLS AND INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL CONSISTENT WITH  
THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN, AND PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

BY THE REV. JOHN BONAR, LARBERT.

"Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart."—Prov. viii 1, 5.

THESE are the words of Christ. They are the words of Christ to men in general—to all men—"to the sons of MAN." They are the words of Christ to all men—to every child of Adam, "To hear and to be of an understanding heart."

Now, we lay it down as part of Divine truth, that all men are by nature dead in sin, and utterly impotent to spiritual good; and we lay it down as equally part of revealed truth, that Christ has a people—that he died for their redemption—and that their being brought out of their state of sin and misery into a state of salvation, is the direct fruit of his suffering in their room and stead.

If these things be so, if all men are dead in trespasses and sins, and yet all men are called—if Christ died for his people, to redeem *them* to God, and yet salvation is offered to all—it follows necessarily that an obligation to spiritual duty is not inconsistent with total spiritual inability, and that a universal offer neither rests upon nor implies a universal atonement. Many think otherwise, and many who do not, are yet greatly perplexed by what such advance. On both of these points, therefore, we would now make a few observations, and having thus sought to clear the way to the full impression which the text should make, we would endeavour to do the thing which it expresses, and call all men everywhere now to repentance.

I. First, then, let us consider the call of the text to spiritual duty, as addressed to men—to all men—"to the sons of *man*."

Nothing more is required to vindicate this way of dealing with men, and to show that it is consistent with the highest wisdom, than that, as means, these calls should, in their own nature, be fitted to produce a right state of mind, and that they should be addressed to beings who, in their nature, ought to be moved by such calls. But many cannot be satisfied with this. In the pride of their heart they say, God could not

call unless man could comply—nay, that it would be unjust in God to exhort, call, and urge, to what man had yet to get the help of God to do ; and, increasing in boldness as they advance in this course, they ask, whether it be not a mockery, unworthy of God, to call dead men to walk, and impotent to rise, and all to do what He knows no man can do without His special grace given to them ?

Now, if the inability of man was the inability of “natural brute beasts,” as the apostle Peter speaks, and the call a call to the service of rational creatures—or if the inability was the inability of men, and the call a call to such to yield to God the service of angels or of archangels—or if the inability was the physical inability of a lame man to walk, and the call that he should rise and walk—though we would wish, even then, to speak with more reverence—there would be more weight in the vaunting words of these objections. But if the inability be the voluntary act of an intelligent being preferring the darkness to the light—if the inability be the inability of such a being to love his God, not with the love of an angel, but with all *his* heart, and all *his* soul, and all *his* strength—if the inability be that of a being who walks after the flesh, because he minds the things of the flesh, and not of the spirit—if the inability be that of a man who cannot find it in his heart to love and to serve the blessed God, and can find it in that very heart to give that love and service to the creature—then there is neither truth nor power in such statements, however vauntingly put forth as unanswerable.

And this *is* the real state of man. There is utter inability in him to spiritual duty, but it is just because sin is preferred. This inability is hopeless, but it is just because this is the governing power of the mind. There is utter helplessness in man, but this is just because this power will always prevail, if help does not come from God ; and there is in all this the deepest and darkest depravity, and that surely can never remove man from his obligation to serve God, or take away God’s right to deal with man as a responsible being.

Such being the true nature of man’s inability, it is evident that every hour of continuance in it is an hour of chosen rebellion, and, therefore, of deepest sin ; and such being the true characteristics which every hour presents to God, there is no inconsistency in God demanding obedience, and no injustice in his punishing those who are not subject to his law, neither, indeed, can be ; and no mockery in his calling these men to turn from their sins.

That this is indeed the case will farther appear, if we consider the following plain truths, to which, as helping to a right judgment of the matter before us, we earnestly entreat your attention.

And, *first* of all, we would say, however startling it may appear at

first sight, that *God can command what men are utterly unable to fulfil*—else, men must be able to keep the whole law of God in thought and word indeed, for God beyond all question does command this—else God could not command anything whatever which man could not perform—else God's right of sovereignty would be measured by man's willingness to comply with it, and God's moral government 'over the wicked would be at an end. *Secondly*, we would say, *God can blame and punish man for not doing what yet he cannot do*—else the more depraved man became, the less blameable he would become; for, if total inability be a complete excuse, partial inability is a partial excuse; and thus the more a man's heart is set in him to do evil, the less blameable he would become; the more thoroughly hardened a man became, the less responsible he would be. *Thirdly*, we would say, *God can demand what man can do only by the aid of his Spirit*—else that which the Spirit of God works must be something which man, as the creature of God, is not bound to possess; for if the Spirit only works in me, what is at that moment, and at every moment, my duty as a creature in such circumstances to be and to do—and the Spirit of God does this and nothing more—it must still be my duty to be in that state whether the help of the Spirit of God be sought or refused. In this case, as in every other case of a moral nature, my want is my wickedness—my weakness is my condemnation. *Fourthly*, we would say, *God cannot demand less of man—cannot demand other of man, than what his Spirit alone can work in the soul*; for God cannot demand other than spiritual service—God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth—God looketh on the heart, and any other service offered to him is a mockery—God is truth, and the Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. And, *fifthly*, therefore, we would say, *God can and does demand of man, and cannot but demand of man—of sinful man—of man lost, undone, and dead—of man without strength, and utterly impotent—repentance and conversion*; for, what is conversion, but just the right state of such a creature towards the blessed God? What is the meaning of me not being able to convert myself, but just that I am so utterly depraved that I cannot love the ever blessed God, and do love the sin which he hates; and what is this but darkest and deepest sin? And what is repentance, but just that state which I cannot be without, for a moment, without in that moment involving myself in deeper rebellion, and contracting to my soul new guilt.

But still it may be said, if in *any way* man is so impotent and utterly unable, without special grace, to comply with the call of God, why should God use this way of dealing with him—why multiply, as the word of God does, calls, and exhortations, and warnings—why press him to turn

and live—to make to himself a new heart—to repent and be converted? To this we answer generally, that such calls certainly do not imply an innate power of compliance, any more than the law being given implies an innate power of fulfilment—that the one and the other implies only that that state of mind to which these call men is the right state of mind which they should have toward God, and that this state of mind, therefore, God must claim, and claim every moment. But, along with this, such calls and invitations serve the most important purposes, some of which we shall merely state.

1st, *They show us our duty and obligation—duty which lies on us at every moment—duty from which nothing can set us free.* This is the great design of all the calls of God to the sons of men. They set forth, not man's power, but God's claim—not what we are able to do, but what we ought to do—not our ability, but our duty.

2d, *These calls of God show the connection betwixt the state to which we are called, and the enjoyment of the blessing promised.* There is a connection of co-existence, though not of cause and effect, and it is of vast importance to hold this constantly before us. As certainly as without Christ there is no salvation, so certainly without a personal union to Christ there shall be no salvation to us. As certainly as without shedding of blood there is no remission, so certainly without our washing in that blood shed, there will be no participation, and hence the gracious, and constant, and urgent call to “take” and live.

3d, *These calls point out and hold before us what must be accomplished in us, if ever we be saved.* They shew us what we are perishing for lack of,—what, if it be never found in us, we shall never see life; and what, if it is found in us, will certainly write us among the heirs of salvation.

4th, *These calls are all designed, intended, and most blessedly fitted, to shut us up to the faith now revealed—to the only way of life for fallen man.* In the gracious procedure of God, what is required as duty is promised as grace; what He demands from us, He promises to work in us; and the demand is not to show us *our strength*, but to shut us up to *his promise*.

5th, *These calls and exhortations are intended to shew us what we ought to pray for.* Some have found out that men ought not *always* to pray. They have found out that, as we cannot pray without faith, so we should not pray till we know that we have faith; and instead of being on their knees crying to God, have learned to argue on the uselessness and impossibility of unconverted men praying. We enter into no controversy, but we do know that one at least who was unconverted—who was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity—was directed to pray, and

that by infallible authority. "Pray God," said Peter to Simon, even when he perceived that he had neither part nor lot in the matter—"if peradventure the thought of thy heart be forgiven thee." Doubtless he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is—doubtless he that cometh acceptably, must come in the new and living way; but, without fixing ought about precedence in things which, when they exist, brook neither the order nor the bounds which men would set, we would say that it is at once the duty and privilege of every soul to cry to God, and these calls, exhortations, and warnings teach them what they ought to pray for, and how they ought to ask it.

*And, finally, and above all, these pressing and urgent calls are designed by him who knoweth all that is in the heart of man, and how he clings to refuges of lies, to shut us out of all so-called neutral ground in spiritual things, and to shut us up to that in which all our safety lies, even the present and instant reception of Christ and conversion to God.* The great delusion of men in general is, that they are doing something for their souls—that they are from time to time taking a step in advance, and that the path in which they are, will at length wind *its* way to salvation. The great anxiety of men is to get something to do, *in the mean time*, which may bear the look of religion, and yet let them alone to pursue their own course. It ministers to this delusion if you advise to read, as if, while reading, they might rest without an interest in Christ. Or if you advise to pray, as if, while praying, they may be satisfied without receiving. Or if you advise to seek, as if, while seeking, there was a degree of safety without finding. It meets this delusion, and there is no other way of meeting it, to leave no resting-place in all the accursed field of nature—to tell all men plainly that there are and can be no *mean times* with God—to say at once God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life, and thus to shut men up to that wherein safety can alone be found.

Yes! what God requires—what he cannot but require, if compliance with his requirement is to include salvation, is conversion, saving faith, repentance unto life. Till this is done, nothing is done. Till Christ be received, death reigns. If you live on, separate from Christ, you but add sin to sin, and therefore treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. If you die in that state, you perish for ever, notwithstanding all your anxieties. If you pray and yet keep back your heart from God, you sin. If you worship, while yet you refuse to give yourself to the Lord, your very worship is mockery—all, all is sin, and danger, and death, till you return to the Lord—till you yield yourself to him—till you repent and be converted. O most blessed day, when the sinner feels this

—when at length he feels that out of Christ there is no resting-place for the sole of his foot, where for a moment he dares to rest—when he utterly despairs of salvation or of hope from himself, and when utterly despairing of all other help, he casts himself into the “outstretched arms of Divine mercy,” and, looking unto Jesus, says at length, “Save *Thou* me, and I shall be saved. Heal *Thou* me, and I shall be healed. Turn *Thou* me, and I shall be turned.” That prayer shall enter into the ear of the hearer and answerer of prayer.\*

II. This brings me to speak, *secondly*, of the ground on which sinners are thus called and invited, and the warrant they have for instant compliance with that call.

Two things are evidently required, in order that these calls may be warrantably addressed to all, and all may have full warrant to comply with them. 1st, That there should be a Saviour provided—and 2d, That that Saviour being provided, his salvation should be freely offered to us. Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour—having all that sinners can need. Christ as thus all-sufficient is freely offered to all,—and this offer of Christ is conveyed to us, upon the testimony of God, and comes to each as “the word of salvation” sent to himself.

The call to come is thus itself the assurance of welcome. As it would have been presumption to come without an invitation, so it is presumption to hesitate when that invitation is sent. As it might have been a question whether we had been meant, if some only had been invited, so there is no room for hesitation, when the voice is to the “sons of man.” As it would have been a dark thing for us if none but those who had some previous good thing about them had been called, so it is most blessed for us that the call is addressed by the authority of Him who calls to the lost, to the perishing, to the condemned, to sinners, even the chief; and as surely as these words describe our true state and condition, so surely does the call of the gospel reach unto us, unto all of us.

This seems a most full and most blessed provision, meeting exactly the state of those who are utterly lost. But many who would be

\* As long as I am told that I must come to God, and that I can come, I am left to suppose that some good thing, or some power of good remains in me, I arrogate to myself that which belongs to Jehovah. The creature is exalted, and God is robbed of his glory. If, on the other hand, I am told that I *cannot* come to God, but not also told that I *must* come, I am left to rest contented at a distance from God, I am not responsible for my rebellion, and God Jehovah is not my God. But if we preach that sinners *cannot* come, and yet *must* come, then is the honour of God vindicated, and the sinner is shut up. Man must be so shut up that he *must* come to Christ, and yet know that he *cannot*. He must be told to come to Christ, or he will look to another, when there is no other to whom he may come. He must be told that he *cannot* come, or he will look to himself. This is the gospel vice, to shut up men to the faith. Some grasp at one limb of the vice and some at the other, leaving the sinner open—but when a man is shut up that he must and cannot, he is shut up to the faith—shut up to the faith, and then would he be shut up in the faith. God is declared to be Jehovah, and the sinner is made willing to be saved by Him, in his own way, as sovereign in His grace.—PROFESSOR DUNCAN'S SPEECH IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF FREE CHURCH, May 21st 1844.

wise above what is written are not satisfied with this. Those who think that universal commands imply universal power of our own to comply with these commands, think also that universal offers imply universal atonement as the ground of these offers. Those who think that the call of God cannot be consistently addressed to men if they cannot of themselves comply, think also that the salvation of Christ cannot be consistently offered to all unless the atonement was made alike for all—alike for those that perish and for those that shall be saved; in a word, that as God's calling supposes ability in all, so God's offering supposes redemption wrought out for all. Such men, feeling, however, that they cannot say this of redemption, viewed as actual deliverance from the punishment and power of sin, without being shut up to universal salvation, soon cut down the offer of the Gospel to the offer of pardon,—feeling that they cannot say of the righteousness of Christ, in its glorious fulness, of his active and passive obedience, what they say so boldly of his sufferings and death, they separate these, and cut down the ground of the Gospel offer to the death of Christ,—feeling that they cannot even say of this that it is universal in the way of a vicarious sacrifice and real satisfaction, they cut this down next, and say that the death of Christ does not secure any saving benefit to any, and is as much endured for the lost as for the saved,—and, finally, feeling that any thing, whatever specific, might hamper them, they get quit of all by saying that the atonement is a great fact—a “general something”—equally done for all, but not securing saving blessings, or any blessings, to any; and as certainly, as fully, wrought out for Judas, who perished, as for Paul, who is saved.

Having thus, with impious hands, parted the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness, and separated what God hath joined, and then deprived even that which remained of any definite object, of any special design or saving power, to a troubled soul, it really does not matter much what they say of it, or what they do with it. No! What such a soul wants, is not a thing unconnected with salvation, but a thing bringing salvation. What such a soul wants, is not a death only, but a life; not an atoning sacrifice only, but a perfect righteousness; not a sacrifice on earth only, but a prevailing intercession in heaven also; not a crucified Christ only, but a risen, exalted, and reigning Christ also. What such a soul wants is Christ as a Redeemer in all the fulness of his offices; and what it wants to know is, whether *this Christ* is offered to it on the authority of God. Now, we dare not say that Christ died for all in the same sense—we dare not pry into the secret book of God, and say that Christ's death was equally designed, in all that it did, for all—we dare not, with venturous hand, tear the robe of Christ's righteousness—we dare not



separate betwixt his oblation and his intercession—we dare neither measure and mete what God hath left general, nor make universal what God hath made definite—we dare not say that Christ died as much for Judas and those who perish, as he did for Paul and those who in heaven are recording for ever his grace in loving them and giving himself for them—but we dare say that Christ is offered to all—freely, truly, fully, and, to all the ends of salvation, offered to all. We dare say that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing to men their trespasses; and, as ambassadors of Christ, yea, as if God did beseech men by us, as in Christ's stead we do beseech men to be reconciled to God. We dare say that, as there is nothing betwixt us and hell, absolutely nothing, but the mortal breath of this life, which may every moment be stopped, so there is nothing, absolutely nothing, betwixt us and Christ—that he standeth at the door and knocketh, and that, if any man will open, he will come in and dwell with him.

But here a proud objector will triumphantly say, and a trembling soul will sometimes also anxiously ask, How can you consistently offer what is not really designed to be given? We answer, *1st*, that if the design of God actually to bestow what he offers, and to put every one to whom the offer comes into possession, *must* be *previously* known, there could be no probation and no moral government of God at all. We answer, *2d*, that this is a difficulty that lies against every system, and against every system equally which admits and acknowledges the certain foreknowledge of God—indeed, against every system but the God-denying one of the fool, which says there is no God. We answer, *3d*, that those who make this objection, have no advantage in point of a full, free, and direct offer of the salvation—even they cannot say that all receive salvation—even they cannot deny that God from all eternity knows who shall be saved—even they cannot say that God designs either the death of Christ or ought else to save those who from all eternity he knew would not be saved; and even they, being as ignorant of God's foreknowledge as we are of God's decree, can as little as those whom they oppose assure *beforehand* as to what is the purpose of God. And we answer, lastly, that our views of the nature of the atonement, and the foreordination of God, does not in the least affect our free and full offer of the Gospel to all; because we do what God hath commanded us to do, knowing that he hath commanded, and that he will do as he hath said, and that whosoever believeth shall be saved.

But, still, an objector may say, *You* offer what is not there; there is nothing in your system except an offer; there is nothing behind it; there is no reality. But where is it, we ask, that there is nothing? Is it in the original design and eternal purpose of God? And is there more in the original design and eternal purpose of God in any system but that

of universal salvation? Or is it in the work of Christ that there is nothing? There is glorious sufficiency in it. The atonement is complete; nothing needs to be, nothing can be added to it. "His work is perfect"—the righteousness is perfect—the intercession is all-prevailing *to the very uttermost*. Or, finally, is it in the offer that there is nothing? There is the most blessed certainty—the largest, the fullest extent in it—and what could there be more of in any offer?

But, still, proud man, after all, returns, and asks, How can you sincerely offer what you say it may not be God's design actually to bestow? And, growing more bold, he says, How can God offer that to all which is not meant for all? This, instead of an offer of mercy, is but mocking and-deceiving man. This is fearful language for man to use, but there is no foundation for it. No! God neither mocks nor deceives any one. Where there is no confidence placed, there can be no deceit experienced. Wherever there is confidence placed, there the blessing is received. There is no deceit, and from this God shall stand for ever infinitely clear. No man, surely, would have God to fulfil his word of promise to those that do not believe it, and do not claim its fulfilment. And whosoever believes it, and claims the fulfilment, to him shall it be made fully and gloriously good, and good for ever.

Putting down, then, all such contendings against God, and escaping from the unwholesome atmosphere whence they spring, let us return to rejoice in the full warrant which every minister has to offer Christ to all—and the full warrant which each has to receive Christ for himself. Christ is set forth to us not only as a Priest, and not only as a Priest offering a sacrifice for sin, but as a Prophet, and a Priest, and a King; and, as such, is made known to us to be received and rested on. The benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification, are freely offered in him. This offer is to be made to "every creature under heaven," on the authority of God. They only who reject this offered grace perish in their sins; they who believe it, and receive it, live and rejoice—joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the atonement.

Thus, without seeking to scan the unrevealed mysteries of the book of God's decrees—without defacing the work of Christ—without blotting out of the Word of God all that is said of God's sovereign grace and electing love—without destroying the object of faith, in order to make it acceptable to those who love not God—without reducing the blessed Word to a few portions of it, and wishing to forget all the rest—without such things as these, there is a full and blessed warrant to come to each sinner, wherever he is, and say "unto you," the voice of Christ comes, "Turn and live." "Look unto me and be ye saved." It is the command of

God to offer Christ,—“Go ye and preach to all nations.” It is the command of God to receive him,—“This is the work of God that ye should believe on him whom he hath sent.” It is the invitation of God to come to him; and it is the promise of God, that whosoever cometh shall in nowise be cast out. “The Spirit saith, come; and the Bride saith, come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

III. And now, therefore, we would fain do what thus we are fully warranted to do—preach the gospel unto every creature. “Unto you, O men, we would call; and our voice is to the children of man.” Unto you is the word of this salvation sent, as surely, as certainly, as directly, as if there was no other sinner in all this world, or no other one to whom the voice of God had come. If your name is not in the invitation of the gospel, neither is it in the condemnation of the law. If your name is not in the call of God, your nature is, and that is more certain than your name. As certainly as you are lost—as certainly as you are condemned and perishing—so certainly are you of those for whom as such, salvation is provided, and to whom as such the invitation of God is sent. Yes, Christ is God’s gift to mankind sinners. The cross is God’s ordinance for the salvation of men, and Christ is dead for you to come to—for you to live by. God calleth you by the ten thousand expostulations and entreaties which he sends in his Word. Christ calleth you by his sufferings—by his death—by his tears of compassion—and by his entreaties of grace. The Holy Spirit calleth you by every one of those words of mercy and of warning, and by every conviction and impression which they awaken in the heart. Thy God hath found thee out, not with words of condemnation, but with words of mercy. His words are all as fresh and full of love as if first now, and first by you, they had been heard in human language. With these words of gracious compassion doth he once more overtake you—beseeching you to turn and live—assuring you that in no wise you shall be cast out. O sons of men, his words mean all that they say, and infinitely more than human words can say; they are but drops of that infinite fountain out of which they flow, but they are drops of the compassion of God—who is a God of truth, and with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning. O how solemn then—how unspeakably solemn is the situation of those to whom Christ’s voice comes in the gracious calls of his glorious gospel! How solemn—how unspeakably solemn our position this very day! Here present this day to hear what God the Lord will speak—called of God to lay hold of eternal life—stripped of all vain excuses, and compelled to acknowledge that God directly, personally, and earnestly beseeches us to be reconciled to him—eternal life in offer, Christ in offer, everlasting blessedness in offer, and

every one either receiving or rejecting these offers. How dreadful is this place! The Lord is in this place and we have known it not. To the eye of man we seem but a congregation of men and women, of old and young, of richer and poorer, gathered together in the way to which men have become so accustomed—hastening to depart as if we had left but a common thing;—but God seeth not as man seeth. God sees here immortal souls—never-dying creatures—sunk in sin, and hanging on the sides of the pit;—God reaches into the depth below and measures that awful word, “perish in their sins;”—God sets forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, and publishes anew the word, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world”—and God sees every soul in the act of receiving, or in the act of rejecting Christ:—God sees Christ either received, or Christ—*His* Christ—rejected in every seat, by every one! Yea, each one shall go out of these doors, either with the joy of Christ and his salvation received, or with the sin of Christ refused and rejected, cleaving to his soul. But, ah! what an infinite difference betwixt these two! What a difference now! What a difference at death! What a difference to all eternity! Refuse Christ, then, you may—many, many doubtless will—but know that God is infinitely clear of the blood of your soul. Refuse Christ you may, but know that his Word will cling to you; “I called but you refused; I stretched out my hands, but ye would have none of my reproof.” How often “I would, but ye would not.” Refuse Christ you may, but be prepared to meet the deed—the deed of this hour—at the judgment-seat. What reason can there be for receiving him after, which is not equally powerful now? What reason is there to think that you shall ever after be moved, if you can resist him now? What cause have you to fear lest the Spirit who “taketh of the things of Christ and sheweth them,” being now resisted and quenched, will stop striving with you? and what reason, therefore, to fear that the awful God-defying record of hardness and refusal now entered in the register above, will be the record read in “that day,” and read as the just ground of your eternal and unchangeable doom? Haste, then—escape,—grasp the hand of Christ yet outstretched to save. Venture not to live another hour a rebel in the face of revealed mercy. And rest not until the voice of Christ to the sons of men, be answered by you in the first breathings of the Spirit of adoption, “I will arise and return to my Father.”—Amen.

## SERMON XXII.

BELIEVING PRAYER HEARD AND ANSWERED.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM WILSON, CARMYLIE.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."—JOHN xv. 7.

HERE is a most precious and cheering promise, and no less sure than it is precious; for He who uttered it hath all power given to Him in heaven and upon the earth, and is able without fail to accomplish whatsoever he hath purposed. He who uttered it is the faithful and true witness, in so much that heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of his word shall not fall to the ground till all be fulfilled. He who uttered it is the same who hath proved his good will to men by evidence the most incontestible—who hath already given unto them a gift so infinitely great, that the bestowal of whatsoever else can enter into the heart of man to conceive would be but small in comparison—who hath not withheld himself, and, consequently, will not withhold his infinite fulness. "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." Here is a promise including all that the heart can desire, a pledge from Him who cannot lie that every wish shall be gratified for the asking. Here is no room for ungratified desire—for the restless craving that cannot be satisfied. Let there be but the forthputting of the request, and this shall be followed up by the forthputting of the Almighty arm to gratify it. The limitation is put, not on the Divine, but on the human will. If a man will, it shall be done. God's will is commensurate, in its outgoings of fulfilment towards man, with that man's will; so that what he asks and desires shall be done, and what he asks not and desires not shall remain unaccomplished.

But here another truth is suggested, which it is most important to consider. When we look to the nature of man, as delineated in the Bible, it becomes perfectly certain that he would never, of his own unaided, undirected will, desire any thing at all from God. And so, in point of fact, this promise, large and liberal as it is, is reduced to a nonentity; and that, not from any defect in the power and the willingness of God to accomplish, but solely on account of a total want of inclination on the

part of man to desire and to ask. He is alienated in all his affections from God, and is not able to come nigh, but must be brought nigh. His will is not to receive aught from God, but to remain widely separate from him, and to achieve his desires by his own energy. It is God who worketh in us to will. And observe, I pray you, how it is that, contemplating the depravity of man apart from the agency of the spirit, the promise of the text is reduced to nothing; contemplating it in connection with this doctrine, the promise receives an infinite enlargement. For really, supposing man was not so depraved as all are by nature—that he were capable of some outgoings of desire to God—that his unaided will should teach his lips the language of prayer—how very small a thing this promise would amount to after all! Some half formed wish might find its appropriate utterance, and then the accomplishment might come from God. But what a mass of ignorance would the will have to contend against—what contradictions would there be between the desire of yesterday and that of to-day. The state of man thus situated would be that of constant change without progress, of instant gratification of desire without happiness.

On the other hand, look to the truth in this aspect. Consider men as altogether without a will to seek help from God; and along with this, consider that it is God who worketh in us to will; and then these two most blessed truths come together into view, filling the heart with gratitude, and peace, and joy. In the first place comes the sweet assurance, that the way in which God guides the will, and gives form, and substance, and strength to its desires, is just in the direction of his own infinitely wise and gracious purposes; and consequently, in the very expression of a will so divinely moved and directed, there is the faith that whatsoever we ask shall be done unto us. There can be no contrariety between a will thus guided and the will of Him who directs it; and we have, moreover, the confidence that, in the utterance of such divine wishes, we are becoming co-workers with God, putting forth the energies He gives us in the direction of his own secret purposes, and moving Him to perform what He most of all delights to do. But in the second place, and more especially, this other truth comes into view, that while the promise of the text is limited by man's will, the fact that God worketh in him to will seems to remove the limitation altogether, and to make the promise one of infinite reach and compass. The amount of our enjoyments—the reception of blessings from God—is thus not made dependent on our limited, indeterminate, feeble conceptions and inclinations. God, indeed, promises to gratify and fulfil the very utmost reach of our desires. But it is not difficult, for example, to fill up the narrow round of an infant's pleasures. Its desires are limited within a very narrow circle, and it

knows nothing, and has no will concerning the far ampler field of enjoyment, which lies beyond the range of its knowledge, and consequently of its desires. So would it be with man. In relation to God, his desires are inconceivably more limited than those of infancy. He speaks as a child, he understands as a child, he thinks as a child. God enlarges his will and converts him into a man, and he puts away childish things. Herein is displayed the infinite largeness of the liberality of God. He not only fills the vessel up to the full measure of its capacity, but he continually enlarges it, that he may continually engage himself in supplying it. He not only satisfies the hungry soul, but he stimulates the appetite for more. He not only grants whatsoever we will, but He enlarges the heart, so that we may come to him with enlarged desires. As a stream of water from a living spring wears its channel deeper and broader the longer it flows, so the more liberally God does unto us what we will, of so much the larger favours does he make us capable. But His is a fountain ever full and exhaustless, knowing no season of drought and barrenness, and, however broad and deep the channel may be, it is kept ever full of that fertilizing water which flows forth from the throne of God.

But you will observe that the promise has other limitations besides that already noticed. It is not said, as addressed to all men, *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* The statement is bounded by an *if*. *If ye abide in Christ, and if his words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Let us now attend, therefore, to the conditions of the promise.

And here I remark, first of all, and as introductory to what is to follow, that before any man can expect the fulfilment of the promise, in his own experience, he must have some interest in Christ, and have formed some bond of connection with Him. Man, as a condemned sinner, can obtain nothing from God on his own account. He lies under the curse of a broken law; exposed to everlasting perdition. God can be to him only a consuming fire. There is an impassible barrier between such a man and God. There can be no communication between the holy and the unclean. The prayers of the wicked are an abomination in the sight of God. He is surrounded with such an atmosphere of holiness, that the breathings of an impure spirit cannot reach him. There is only one channel of communication between the sinner and God, and that is Christ. When God looks upon us, he can see nothing to approve. In his sight we are altogether as an unclean thing; even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Our holiest services are polluted in his sight. But there is a Day's Man between us who is able to lay his hand upon both. Our prayers cannot come up before God with acceptance, but the angel of the everlasting covenant stands before the throne, with his golden vial, and

as He, the everlasting intercessor, pours from it the prayers of the saints, he perfumes them with the sacred incense of his own holiness, and they come up as a sweet savour before the Father. Thus it is that our prayers are all offered up for Christ's sake, and it were well that we fully understood and deeply felt what is implied in the use of these most significant words. There is reason to fear that many a prayer wafted heavenward remains unanswered, because the grand condition of all acceptable prayer is not fully felt as it ought to be! Men pray as if they had a right to ask, and a title to expect, favours from God, on their own independent footing. There is much trusting to his goodness and forbearance, and mercy, forgetful all the while, that God can only hear through the intercessor before the throne, and can only manifest his goodness through the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus. When we ask of God, for Christ's sake, the bestowment of any blessing, it were well that the truth were blazoned before the eye of our inner consciousness, that we cannot be accepted save in the beloved; that if God looks directly at us, we are condemned; that he can only be well pleased when he looks on us in the face of his anointed—when he beholds in the lamb that had been slain justice fully satisfied, and in the lamb now alive and living for ever more, the evidence of his own sealed and irrefragable covenant. When we ask anything for Christ's sake, we acknowledge that we are not worthy in ourselves to receive it—when we plead the name of Jesus, we acknowledge our own guilt, and proclaim him the sole ground of our hope—when we point to him, we entreat God not to look upon us—we renounce our own righteousness—we confess our own shame—we plead for a standing in Jesus—we claim an interest in his work—we profess to stand in his righteousness—to hope for mercy through his peace-speaking blood. The general outline, then, of the truth contained in the text is, in words, acknowledged by every professing Christian. Every man that has prayed to God for Christ's sake, has in words made the acknowledgment, that in order to obtain what he desires, it is absolutely necessary he should have some interest in Christ, some bond of connection with him. This connection is formed and sustained by faith. It is formed by the very fact of leaning upon Christ—depending on his work for acceptance with God, and for the reception of every blessing we expect to obtain at his hands.

But, to be more particular, I remark, in the second place, that there is a difference more easily understood, perhaps, than stated, between being thus united to Christ in faith, and abiding in him continually. It is true that he who has been really joined to Christ has been united to him by a tie which nothing in time or eternity can wrench asunder; but, at the same time, it is possible that there may be an interruption for a time



of that free communication which such a union implies. Thus, to adopt the figure employed by Jesus in the context, in which he represents himself as a vine, and his people as the branches, it is conceivable that some accident or disease should for a time impede the circulation of the juices from the stem to the branches, so that they would become stunted in growth, and comparatively lifeless and fruitless. Though it be the very property of the connection established between the trunk and the branches, that the former should distribute its own sap and fatness to every twig, and to the remotest point of every leaflet that depends upon it, it is possible that this relationship may be so interrupted, that while the branch is not severed, and while it retains life derived from the stem, it may be ready to die, and require much care in the husbandman to preserve it alive. So, in the union of the believer with Christ, it is possible that he may fall into temptation, and a snare, and become the prey of divers lusts, which are the diseases of the soul, and become like a bruised reed. Instead of exhibiting that healthy vigour which shows a firm union with Christ, and the constant supply of the riches that are in him, there may be a time of backsliding, of sore sickness of the soul, and pining anguish, life not extinguished, but its lamp burning very feebly.

Or, to take another illustration, Christ is represented as a covert from the tempest. When a man believes, he has taken refuge under this covert from the hurricane of God's avenging ire, and, thus protected, it will sweep harmlessly past him. But it is the believer's duty, as well as his privilege, not only to betake himself to this covert, but to sit continually under its shadow. And this is what is meant by abiding in Christ. He has been the dwelling place of his people in all generations. It is their privilege, and honour, and happiness to abide in him, as in a sweet and peaceful home. The storms may rage without, but here they are secure, enjoying the communion of a father's love, and the counsels of a father's wisdom. And if even in the homes of this world there be much to gratify the heart, in the free circulation of those affections which emanate from parent to child, and brother to sister, each meeting with its refreshing reward in the return which it receives, how much more full of blessedness is it under that covert which He has provided, to meet with and receive sweet tokens of affection from our glorious and infinitely blessed father, and to have all the longings of an affectionate heart gratified in the fulness of his everlasting love. But we are ungrateful wayward children. We do not choose always to abide in the covert; we will not sit under the shadow of Christ though *there* there is great delight to our depraved tastes—his fruit is not always sweet. We see some bright and tempting object without, and we make haste to seize it. We leave the security of our

home, our only safe abiding place. We forget that we can only stand in Christ, and thus our will is unaccomplished, our desires ungratified. You will understand how it is, then, that a believer may often experience something like a shock of disappointment when he finds his prayers unanswered. They are so not because God is unfaithful, or even slack concerning his promise, but just because the conditions of that promise are not fulfilled. Though united to Christ he is not abiding in him. He is forgetful of his true position, and he cannot be heard because he asks amiss. The father hears us only when we are in our dwelling-place—when the voice of supplication ascends from that sanctuary which has been consecrated by the blood of Jesus. When we speak otherwise than through Christ, we cannot be heard. The prayer only enters into the ear of God which is wafted on the wings of faith, and which becomes melodious from the meeting of mercy and truth, and the sweet harmony of righteousness and peace, blended in the offering of Christ. Every desire, to be acceptable to God, must be breathed through Him who has been constituted the medium and the organ of communication between us and God.

But, let us now, with the help of these illustrations, look a little more closely at the expression, “if ye abide in me.” The union of Christ with his people is often set forth in such language as this, conveying the idea of mutual incorporation. It would appear, indeed, from the variety of figures adopted in the Bible, to make this union level to our apprehension, as well as to give us some idea of the blessedness of which it is the perpetual and unailing source, as if language were altogether incapable of conveying to us an adequate impression either of its nature or of its happiness. To shew that it is a union of dependence in which, on the one hand, there is a constant outgoing of favour, and on the other a constant reception, the figure of a vine and its branches is adopted. Again, when another view of this union is desired to be placed before us, the Apostle represents Christ as the head, his people as the body and the members, shewing that the union is one in which Christ is the Governor and director, and his people the obedient and eager servants of his will. Again, when the delights of this union are represented, everything that is pleasant to the eye and the ear, everything soothing and refreshing in nature, is laid hold of, and employed as emblems to shadow forth the beauty and desirableness of Christ; every relationship of life, capable of ministering comfort to the soul, is adopted as an emblem to show the supreme blessedness of a union with Christ. He is the everlasting father, the elder brother, the tender mother, the bridegroom. Again, when the union of Christ with his people is set forth as of the most *intimate* as well as of the most endearing kind, he

employs no existing relationship as an emblem at all fitted to represent it. He speaks of himself being in us, and he speaks of us being in him, and abiding in him. Now, when we are spoken of as being in Christ, and when he is represented as in us, it is not meant that there is a personal union between the believer and him, but generally this, that he is their representative in the covenant—that it is through him they have their title to life—that as Adam in the first covenant stood forth as the representative and head of the whole human family, so that when he sinned and fell, they sinned in him, and fell with him; even so Christ in the second covenant stood forth as the representative and head of those whom the Father had given unto him; so that when he obeyed and suffered, they obeyed in him and suffered with him.

But this intimate and incorporating union with Christ is suggestive of other views, and presents to our mind different truths than these. Thus it will be observed, that generally, and, in some cases so specifically as not to be mistaken, when Christ is spoken of as being in us, he is represented as the living spirit, moulding our wills, and bringing them into conformity with his own; originating and giving form and direction to all our desires; presiding within us, as it were, in the character of a sovereign and creative agent; so subordinating all our affections to his own, and so forming and strengthening them, that whatever we do or say in fulfilment of, and to give shape and development to, the dispositions within us, has been so far the product of his will, and the operation of his divine Spirit, that they cannot be recognised as our own deeds and sayings, but are seen and felt to be the words and actions of Him by whose Spirit we are animated. This is a truth which is set forth abstractly in the injunction, Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may be led to glorify your Father who is in Heaven. Now, from the statement here given regarding the anticipated result of a display of good works, even that men should not be led to glorify the visible doer of them, but to glorify their invisible originator; it is manifest that the good works were to be of such a character that men should see in them, and acknowledge, the hand of God; that the light should be discerned as a light not underived, but reflected. And, again, still more plainly, because, brought out in connection with the acknowledged union with Christ as the source of all holy deeds and aspirations, the Apostle declares of himself, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now lead in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Here, then, is an acknowledgment that the Apostle had no life and power in himself—that great as were the energies he displayed, the unconquerable will, the unwearied labour, the tireless zeal, the wis-

dom and surpassing love which directed and animated all his toils—these were not his own, not exhibited for his own praise, it was not really he, it was Christ living in him that germinated and produced such fair and plentiful fruits, to the praise of the glory of his own grace. In himself, and animated by his own spirit, he would have been but a narrow-minded bigotted Pharisee, a persecutor of the brethren. It was not his own spirit, but the Spirit of Christ in him that expanded his soul, so as to embrace the Gentiles in its large affections, which converted him into a citizen of the world, made every soul precious to him, and sent him through perils of every kind with yearning and quenchless love, seeking how he might do them good. It was not his own, it was the Spirit of Christ living in him, and acting through him, that made the man who breathed out slaughter and threatenings, gentle among all men, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. In every duty he was called upon to discharge, in every trial he had to endure, he had the patience and fortitude of Christ living in him. It was not he that suffered and acted, and spoke with such matchless wisdom. He had a derived supernal nature within him, a spirit which had laid hold of all his faculties and desires, sanctified them, and made them its own. It was no longer he that preached and laboured, and prayed, and fought; it was Christ living in him. And so it is with all in whom Christ abides. His divine Spirit subordinates and changes the will, gives to all the faculties a new direction, and employs them upon new objects, so enlarges and purifies all the affections, that it becomes manifest it is not man, but God, who is working. Not the might, or wisdom of a human agent, but the strength and intelligence of Christ himself. Thus by Christ dwelling in us, men take knowledge of us, that we have been with him.

You will perceive, then, that when Christ is spoken of as being in us, and living in us, we are represented as living and acting among men, discharging those duties to which providence calls us, and sustained in them all by an ever living invincible spirit, who gives us the victory, and whose is all the glory; because it is not we but he that liveth in us, by whom we act.

On the other hand, when the converse expression, 'as in the text, is employed, and when we are represented as being in Christ, we are viewed then, not in our relation to our fellow men, but in our relation to God; not as engaged in the discharge of active duty, but in gathering strength for the performance of it; not as overcoming difficulties in an active conflict, but as cherishing our souls with holy contemplations. When we are in Christ, we become, as it were, the spirit, and He the active visible agent. Then we are engaged in uttering those desires which reach up to heaven and stretch through eternity, in cherishing the glorious hope

of immortality, in praying for a larger heart, and clearer conceptions, in trusting in, and loving God. While thus engaged, Christ waits, as it were, to execute our purposes, to fulfil the desires of the inner spirit. We are in him, and, even with that alacrity with which the members of the body act in accordance with the will, so is Christ ready to accomplish our desires. This is what is meant by the condition of the text, "If ye abide in me." If ye remain within me continually, then that relationship which God has established between the body and the soul is not more intimate than that which exists between me and thee. You form in your heart a purpose, and you find your bodily members willing to execute it. Even so, if ye abide in me, there is no purpose of your souls but it shall meet with its prompt fulfilment. You cannot in this position form and express a wise, but there is an Omnipotent arm ready to execute it. Boundless and exulting hope cannot range so far, that my hand may not reach its objects, and convert them into present realities. Rejoice, then, O soul in Christ, dwelling, abiding in him; not only are you shielded from all danger, but you may be filled at every moment to the fullest measure of your capacity with the sweetest enjoyment. Never was a cup presented to the very lips of men so full, so overcharged with blessing, as when Jesus said, If ye abide in me ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. The condition complied with, it shall be done. Here is the assurance—Christ is in us, giving form to our thoughts, enlarging and directing our desires, sanctifying and elevating our wills, till every thing within us is in harmony with his will; and then we are in Christ, he overshadows and defends us, his arm is ready to execute our behests, to pour into our souls rivers of pleasures, to make all the universe minister to our gratification, and to bend every event to operate for our good. Heaven and earth and hell are subject to his sway, and it is his will that our desires, so sanctified and directed, should be gratified in all their longings. The will has been changed and brought into harmony with that of Christ, and in carrying into effect what it purposes, he is just accomplishing his own everlasting, all wise, and most bountiful designs. Whenever we desire to have that which it is not equally his desire to bestow, this is an evidence that we are not abiding in Him, and consequently we cannot expect, we have no promise, that such desires shall be fulfilled.

Observe, however, in the last place, that there is another condition attached to the promise, "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you, *if my words abide in you.*" This expression at once suggests two truths:

*First*, it seems designed to indicate more fully than had been done in the preceding clause, how necessary it is, in order to the fulfil-

ment of the promise, that there should be a perfect identity of will between us and Christ. It is not possible to find a more complete evidence of two souls brought into perfect harmony, than that which is furnished by their thoughts being uniformly clothed in the same language. Language is the embodiment of thought and desire, and the differences which obtain between the methods in which any two men would express the same views, indicate a corresponding difference in mental constitution. The thoughts take their form and shape from the co-operation of all the various faculties and affections of the mind, and could we find any two individuals who, without any laboured imitation, would naturally and easily adopt the same language, we would be certain of a complete identity of mental constitution, and that the two, in similar circumstances, would desire the same things, and act in the same way. Even so is it with him in whom Christ dwells, and who himself abides in Christ. There is produced an entire conformity of nature; a conformity more perfect than obtains between any two men. For not only are the thoughts directed to the same objects, not only would the wishes compass the same events, but the whole nature is so moulded into the express image of Jesus, that the wishes have the same hue and complexion, and are clothed in the same language.

So it will be with all the saints in heaven. So it is not always with the most matured of the saints on earth. And thus it is that the answer to prayer so often disappoints expectation. The words of Christ do not abide in us, and we send up to the throne on high the words of human passion and human infirmity. There is no promise that such words will meet their fulfilment. The conditions of the promise have not been complied with on our part, and God would belie his own word were he in such a case to answer prayer. But there are seasons, too, and these not of unfrequent occurrence, when, even in the case of the feeblest and least experienced believer, the soul is enlarged and quickened by the indwelling spirit, when, even in the very exercise of prayer, great freedom and boldness of access is given; and there is a felt experience of nearness to God, and then there is, even instantaneously, the sweet conviction, not so much that prayer will be answered, as that it has been already answered, and that God has given us that which we willed; that while we have been speaking, God has heard us.

But, *secondly*, I remark that the condition, "If my words abide in you," implies, that the words with which God has furnished us, are to be our guide and directory in prayer. It is *his* promises we are to plead, the truths of *his* word we are to found our hopes upon, *his* declared purposes that are to guide our desires, *his* representation of our condition that is to regulate and give form to our confessions. It is not meant

strictly that all our prayers should be moulded to the very language of Scripture, but rather that the Bible should shew us what it is we are to ask for, should limit and define our desires, and keep them within the compass of God's purposes and promises. This, indeed, is our sure directory. We might be easily deceived by the inner working of our spirits, and conceive that a flash of excitement and enthusiasm was an emanation from God, and thus be led to expect an answer to our own passions. But we have a more sure word of prophecy. We have the revelation of God's will in our hands, and if our spirits are in harmony, if our spirits bear witness along with his, we have the evidence of their mutual consent in the sayings of this book. Whenever our desires go beyond this range, whenever our wills are contrary to the express declaration of the mind of God, we may be assured that we cannot be heard, that the promise cannot be verified in our experience, because we have not fulfilled its conditions.

Such views as these will remove a difficulty which has been often felt, and not unfrequently expressed, and which may be thus stated. How does it happen, if it be true that believers have thus the whole universe, as it were, at their command, that they are often oppressed and overborne, subject to manifold afflictions, distresses, and privations. Surely these do not come upon them in fulfilment of their desires. They do not pray for sore calamities to come upon them. These come, do they not, in spite of strong entreaty to the contrary? I am not sure that they do. When I read these words of Paul, "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that hope maketh not ashamed, the love of God being shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost ministered to us." When I read such a statement as this, I am not sure but the saints of God in every age might even long to know and experience the sweet uses of adversity. At all events, of this I am certain, that when these two, the cross and the crown, are placed before them, as invariable concomitants, their prayer will ever be, give me the cross with the crown, give me the suffering with the glory that is to be revealed, and no evidence could be stronger of a soul unvisited, unrefreshed, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, utterly destitute of faith and hope, than the ever prevalent desire of ease, rest, quietness, carnal comfort, even though in the hot sunshine of this world's favours, the graces of the Divine life should be entirely withered up, and the glories of eternity cease to be an object of hope. The plants of the Lord's garden, which are most fresh and beautiful, and which emit the sweetest fragrance, are those that have been planted in the valley of humiliation, and watered with many tears.

Neither is it to be objected to the faithfulness of the promise contained

in the text, that God does not at once and immediately fulfil all the desires that are uttered in Christ; much less is it to be pleaded that God belies his promise, if He does not carry out his fulfilments in the way of the believer's hopes and desires. God's wisdom is not bounded by our conceptions of what is best, and the believer must be satisfied that the methods which He takes to fulfil his purposes and promises will be at once consistent with his faithfulness and his purposes of infinite mercy. Hence the believer will not prescribe to God the methods by which He is to accomplish his promises. While he may earnestly desire deliverance from present overwhelming calamities, his request will always be, "Not my will but thine be done." Moreover, while the prayers of the faithful will contain many petitions, they will all be subordinated to this, as the pre-eminent one, even that their souls may be more and more transformed into the likeness of the Divine Redeemer. Therefore, whatever method God may adopt to accomplish the grand object of the believing soul, will contain within itself the fulfilment of all a believer's petitions. Though every hope should be blighted, and every cherished desire thwarted by God in his dealings with his people, if it shall turn out in the end that such a course was the best for effecting the moral transformation of their souls, and for changing them from glory to glory into the same image with God, they will acknowledge that God has accomplished in them all that He has promised in the text. For, if the great aim of believers and of God harmonise in this, that this new creation must be perfected by whatever means—and if they desire other blessings only as the enjoyment of them may be conducive to this great end—then, beyond question, in the accomplishment of that end, they have done unto them what they willed, and all that they willed. God's method for working out this transformation may not harmonise with ours, but His, we are constrained to believe, is not only the best, but the only method by which the object could be accomplished. To effect this object, two things may be necessary from the very nature of the case.

1st, It may be necessary that, instead of instantly gratifying all our holy desires, God should keep us waiting, and oblige us to exercise ourselves in cherishing and uttering them. Jacob did not instantly obtain the blessing which he sought, and was obliged both to wait and wrestle for it, even till the breaking of the day. But he acquired from thence a new name, because as a prince he had power with God and prevailed. In the very exercise of wrestling he became a prince, and in him we have the emblem and example of that elevation and strength which is derived from the habitual exercise of the soul in prayer. Nor is it difficult to perceive how there may be, on the part of God, a display at once of the highest wisdom, and the most boundless love, in keeping his people waiting, watching, cherishing the soul refreshing desires of prayer; and, by



this method maintaining a more continuous and direct intercourse with himself than if at once He answered every request. All petitions are, in fact, more than answered by such sustained communion; for thus we are made more largely partakers of the Divine nature, we have more of His grace infused into us, and become more fitted for speaking the language and enjoying the society of the heavenly places.

2d, It may be necessary, in order to the accomplishment of God's grand purpose, and of the believer's chief desire, in the salvation of the soul, that we should sustain the conflict, and do battle with our spiritual adversaries. We must bear about with us a body of death, even till death take it away. We have to sustain a long and hard conflict, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places. However ardently we may long for it, our emancipation does not come till the battle is over, and the crown has been won. Nor would it be wise or well were it otherwise. The children of Israel did not get to the rest and enjoyment of the land flowing with milk and honey, till they had been forty years in the wilderness. But they reached it as soon as they were prepared to take possession of it. They had been in slavery in Egypt, and it was long before they were prepared to enjoy the immunities of free men. Nor did they obtain quiet possession of the whole land even after they had faith to enter it. It was God's plan to drive out their enemies by little and little before them. It was needful that they should be taught their dependence on the arm of the Almighty, and that their souls should be fortified by a long continued conflict. And so it is with God's people now. It were not well that he should so shelter them, as that the cold blasts and storms of the world should never reach them. Exercised by temptations—exposed to trials—and enduring a manifold fight of afflictions, they learn hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and become not like weak and sickly plants, reared with much artifice and tender care, but grow up like the cedars of Lebanon, stately and strong, and beautiful in their strength. The power, and gracefulness, and beauty of the saint cannot be perfected otherwise than by placing him in circumstances where he shall be constrained to diligent and strenuous effort. But if, through the agency of this warfare, the believer's great object is in the way of being perfected—if by such means he is attaining a greater likeness to God—all his desire is accomplished. And God does not leave his people to fight the battle alone. He provides them with suitable armour—his voice animates them in the conflict—He assures them of a glorious triumph—He refreshes them when they are faint and weary, and points them to the time when with palms in their hands, and the victor's crown upon their brow, they shall not only enjoy their rest, but become partakers of immortal glory.—AMEN.

## SERMON XXIII.

THIS WORLD NOT OUR REST.

BY THE REV. JAMES FOOTE, A.M.,

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MICAH ii. 10.—“Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted; it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.”

HUMAN beings seem universally characterized by a spirit of restlessness. There is no person whatever, who would not, on consideration, find something which he would wish to be otherwise. This spirit, existing, either as an obvious passion, or as a smothered feeling, is inseparably connected with our fallen state, and though very liable to abuse, is yet very capable of producing excellent effects. It excites a propensity to look forward, and to go forward. Hence the soul refuses to settle into inactivity, and is ever pressing on to the attainment of some future good, real or imaginary. The trifler hopes that the time will come at last when he shall trifle no more; the inconsiderate and grovelling never think they have enough of amusement, or of sensuality, but are still looking for more enjoyment in the paths of folly and vice; the man of rational research is still in expectation of discovering something in a higher degree gratifying to his intellectual capacities and habits; and he who lives by faith feels that he is far from having attained, and therefore presses forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is very desirable, then, that this restlessness should always be excited by a right cause, and always urge us forward to a right end. May our meditations, on the present occasion, be blessed of God to promote in us this desirable effect!

The words of the text were originally addressed by Micah, in God's name, to the Israelites, after a faithful description of the impiety, idolatry, oppression, and various iniquities which then over-spread and polluted the land in which they dwelt; and the words had doubtless a reference to their captivity. All lands, however, too closely resemble the land of Israel in depravity. The words, therefore, very naturally admit of an universal application. Consider then, my friends, yourselves

as now thus warned and exhorted, "Arise ye and depart;" for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction."

I propose, by the help of God,

I. To show why we never can have our rest in this world;

II. To address to you the exhortation, "Arise ye and depart;" and

III. To speak to three classes of persons.

I. *To show why we never can have our rest in this world.*

1st, One obvious reason why we cannot have our rest here is, that *our continuance on earth is short and uncertain*. Before any situation can be entitled to be called our rest, it must be of long duration—nay, eternal. If very short and uncertain, it would not be of much value; nay, if it were to have any end at all, we should feel sure that the time was approaching when it would be to us as if it had never been, and the consciousness of this would deprive it of all power to satisfy us in the meantime. Is then our life on earth possessed of this attribute of durability? So far from it, our days are fading like the grass; we are crushed before the moth. How many are removed in infancy and childhood! Many are cut down at various stages of life, without warning. Some persons, it is true, are said, comparatively with others, to live long. What, however, are a few scores of years to the salvation of an immortal soul? Unless our life had no end, it would not be long enough. But "what is our life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

2d, If our life on earth, though short, were perfectly steady and happy, this would be an important circumstance; but it is far otherwise: for we proceed to remark, as another reason why we can never have our rest here, that *while life lasts it is full of trouble*—it has many changes, labours, disappointments, and sorrows. "Man that is born of a woman" is not only "of few days, but full of trouble;" "he is born to trouble;"—it is as natural to him as that the sparks should fly upwards. Can such a life, then, possibly be our rest? To what *changes* are we exposed here below! Some live as wanderers on the face of the earth, having no certain dwelling-place. The majority repeatedly shift the place of their residence, while only a few end their days in the spot where they began them. This is not a place of rest, but of *labour*. How severe the toil to which the majority are subjected, while, in pursuance of the Divine decree, as they return to dust, they earn their bread by the sweat of their brow! In this way some exert themselves beyond their strength, and others toil on under such infirmities, that they would rather

need to be treated as patients than as persons fit for hard labour. Nor is trouble the exclusive lot of those who occupy the lower stations of life. There are the labours of the mind, as well as those of the body; and it is what affects the mind that strikes most directly at the seat of our peace. There are the harassing care and the drudgery of those who are engaged in extensive business; there is the intellectual struggle in those who would make great acquirements in knowledge—the weariness of the flesh in much study; there is the mental anxiety of all who aspire; there is the waking dream, and there is the sleepless night; there is the indescribable feeling of nervousness; there is the gloom of melancholy, and there is the eclipse of reason: all these ought to be considered as so many monitors reminding men that this is not their rest.

Think, too, of the *disappointments and reverses* of life. How many schemes into which men eagerly enter, and from the completion of which the greatest enjoyment is expected, prove altogether abortive! Often one sows and another reaps: and often the man who is building a house does not live to inhabit it. “Surely men walk in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain.” To what calamitous reverses, also, are the affairs of men subject! Many a nation has been hurled from power and luxury, into bondage and misery; and many “a rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly and said I am, and there is none beside me,”—“I sit a queen and shall never see sorrow,”—has become “a desolation and a place for the beasts to lie down in.” What reverses, too, befall families and individuals! While some emerge into notice, many sink into obscurity. There are whose “inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; who call their lands after their own names: and nevertheless being in honour abide not.” This their way is surely their folly: yet too many continue to approve their sayings. In reference to the uncertainty of earthly possessions, and to the many cases of individuals passing from prosperity and affluence to embarrassment and penury, well may we say with the wise man, “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven,”

When we take into consideration the various forms of *bodily distress* under which all are more or less destined to labour, how foolish must it appear to look on this state as a state of rest! Personal experience convinces some, and extensive observation teaches others, how grievous are the ravages of pain and sickness. Many who are able to go out, and even to appear in the house of God, carry about with them the memento of their frailty. Many, far more indeed than is generally supposed, actually labour under severe distress. Many a sufferer “is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain,”

and is "full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day;" being ready to "say in the morning, Would God it were even; and at even, Would God it were morning. The days of affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season, and my sinews take no rest. Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for; even that it would please God to destroy me—that he would let loose his hand and cut me off."

Will it be said that, though we are exposed to trouble ourselves, we may find rest in our *friends*? Most thankful ought we to be for the blessings of friendship, and the help and solace of our relations. But while it is our duty to love them, and to be grateful to them as the conscious and kind instruments, we shall suffer for it severely if we idolize them as the authors of our happiness, or look to them as our ultimate resource. One proves faithless and unkind: the familiar friend in whom we trust lifts up the heel against us. Another goes so far astray that we are grieved to the heart. In other cases, where nothing very improper is committed on either side, the coolness of jealousy or of misunderstanding deprives our friendships of all their wonted power to please. Should none of these things occur, but should all our connections prove good and kind, still they are but frail and mortal creatures, and we may endure sorrow, on their account, sharp in proportion to their very goodness and kindness. We suffer doubly in sympathising with them, and the time is coming when we must part. Alas! every friendship, every intimate connection, is formed on this condition, that one of the parties shall bewail the death of the other; and he who is left behind is often the more to be pitied of the two. God "changes their countenances, and sends them away. Lover and friend doth he put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness." What, too, is the præminence of the survivor of many relations, but the painful præminence of having been most frequently a mourner? Helpless, then, are they who have no other resource but what is to be found in the greatest and best of mortals. Against such trust we are warned, under the threatening, not only of disappointment, but of bringing on ourselves the curse of God. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Thus saith the Lord, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh."

3d, We can never have our rest here, because, *though our whole life were steady, prosperous, honourable, and pious in the highest degree, still it would not be a satisfying portion to the soul.*

In the course of a kind Providence, there are some who are, though not absolutely, yet comparatively, happy; whose tenor is calm and uniform; who, in a great degree, escape the disappointments and calamities which befall others, and who appear to the hasty observer to have nothing to disturb them. We shall err, however, if we imagine that such are free from trouble. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." There are sources of uneasiness which a stranger cannot discover. Nay, where there are no real troubles men are sure to find imaginary ones. In the very midst of what is called quietness, the consciousness of its instability often passes painfully across the mind; and he who lives many days, and rejoices in them all, yet fears at times that the days of darkness will be many. To be altogether at rest, we must be sure that our rest will never be disturbed.

Nor can the continuance of positive *prosperity*, and ever-increasing *wealth*, satisfy the mind. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity." Equally unsuccessful is the pursuit of mental tranquillity in scenes of frivolity and *mirth*. "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre; so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." When Darius felt conscious of his criminality in exposing Daniel to the lions, he felt that all the usual gaities of the court would have been ineffectual to give him rest. "He went to his palace, and passed the night in fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him." Daniel vi. 18. "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?"

Neither is the more rational pursuit of *human knowledge* found to secure rest to the soul. Nay, the man of the world's wisdom, in consequence of his discrimination, and high degree of susceptibility, is more liable to be disquieted than the dull and the ignorant. "I gave my heart (says Solomon) to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. And, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Eccles. i. 13, 14, 18.

As speculation and theory cannot satisfy the mind, so neither can *great works*, in their undertaking, or progress, or accomplishment. However useful or ornamental any labours or improvements may be, and to whatever extent they may occupy the mind, still there is a want in them all. "He builds too low who builds beneath the skies." This Solomon felt, for he abounds in sentiments appropriate to our subject. Eccles. ii. 4-11.

As labour is found unproductive of perfect mental tranquillity, so *indolence* is, at least, equally so. Worn out with the fatigue and anxiety of complicated concerns, the man of business has thought to secure to himself unmixed enjoyment by withdrawing into retirement; yet has he then been soon glad to escape, by any means, from what he has proved to be a state of unsupportable wearisomeness. In all cases, inactivity leaves the mind at leisure to prey upon itself. "The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh."

In vain does a man expect rest by keeping as much as possible to *the same spot*, for trouble, though not courted, will make inroads on his peace;—though he do not go in search of care, care will be sure to find him. In vain, too, does he expect to find rest to his mind by *moving his body* from place to place. Though he hasten from country to country, he still carries along with him the cause of his own restlessness; the rankling arrow sticks fast in his heart, nor can he shake it out. Whatever momentary amusement he may find, he finds no satisfactory rest. "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

Perhaps the most flattering state to the worldly mind is that of him who has run successfully the career of *ambition*, and subjected many nations to his victorious sway. But has such a man found rest? So far from it, that his situation abounds, beyond every other, with disquietude and peril. Though history contained no accounts of men tumbled from the throne into the dungeon—though we had never heard of conquerors being conquered in their turn, or perishing by the sword, or by poison, or in captivity and exile on a barren rock—it were enough for us to know that, even in the plenitude of their glory, they were not satisfied. "He is a proud man," says Habakkuk of the man of ambition, "neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." We have a trite, indeed, but pertinent example, in Alexander the Great, who is said, after having conquered the greater part of the known world, to have wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Cæsar, too, who, becoming emperor of Rome, became the greatest man on earth, is said to have exclaimed, "And is this all!" Even where no unlawful means are employed to gain or to preserve a crown, it brings cares along with it, which only he who wears it can know. "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."

It is necessary to add, that even the people of God, however spiritually-minded, and however advanced in the Divine life, cannot find their rest here. It is true, that in a particular sense, and to a certain extent, they have found it, that is, they have a measure of joy and peace in believing.

While unbelievers are altogether off the way of peace, the children of God are on the path which will lead to perfect peace. But still, perfect satisfaction, their ultimate rest, cannot be obtained below. A few moments' reflection must fully convince us that the posture of believers always has been, now is, and will ever be, an *expecting* posture. They have never sitten down careless of the future, but have always been looking forward to something more glorious to come. While various objects, of comparatively inferior and short-lived importance, occasionally engaged the hopes of the Old Testament Church—while she waited in hope, at one time, of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, at another, of entering into the land of Canaan, and at another, of restoration from Babylonish captivity—the fulfilment of the promises concerning the seed of the woman—the Messiah—the desire of all nations and the consolation of Israel—exercised her faith and patience, and kept alive her hope, during many a dark and dreary age. Those who enjoyed the bodily presence of the Son of God on earth, and who saw but little fruit from his ministry, were encouraged by the expectation of a far more striking display of Divine grace at an after period, and, in reference to the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, were commanded “to wait for the promise of the Father.” And what is the posture of the Church at the present moment? Not a posture of acquiescence in the progress she has already made, but a posture of restlessness and expectation, as she mourns over the hundreds of millions who people the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty, and as she earnestly longs for the day in which the whole family of man shall be blessed with Christian light and righteousness. Nay, even then, when she shall have seen the glory of the latter day, when she shall have reached the greatest degree of prosperity and happiness compatible with her sublunary state, even then she will feel that this is not her rest. She will still retain her expecting posture, and be looking forward with anxiety to the period when time shall be no more, when the mystery shall be finished, and when all her millennial shall be swallowed up in her heavenly glories. As it is with the Church as a body, so it is with the individual members of whom she is composed. Who among them, however holy and contented, could have any satisfaction in what he is if he did not expect to be something better? Who among them ever sat down, or could sit down, to say, “I am now all that I could wish.” However happy the children of God may here be, they are still subject to some uneasiness. However calm they may feel, their quiet is sometimes disturbed; their rest “*remaineth*,” it is still in reserve, and, therefore, they are still but expectants. However near they may be to their Lord, there is still a veil between. They know, and painfully feel, that, “whilst they are at home in the body,



they are absent from the Lord," and, walking only by faith, and not by sight, "they are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Their state is indeed good, but still they "have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." In short, our present state is a state of "earnest expectation." "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Thus, not even the most advanced Christians have their rest here. And we see, universally, that none can have their rest below, because though their whole life were steady, prosperous, honourable, and pious, in the highest degree, still it would not be a satisfying portion to the soul.

4th, We never can have our rest in this world, because of the prevalence of sin, or, as the text expresses it, this is not our rest "because it is polluted." By an unalterable decree of heaven, sin is inconsistent with happiness; as, therefore, this world is a world of rebellion, it cannot be a world of peace. Were our own painful observation insufficient to convince us of the melancholy prevalence of iniquity on earth, the declarations of God's Word ought to settle the inquiry. Of the world before the flood, it is said, Gen. vi. 5, 11, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt." That this description, notwithstanding the diversity of forms and shades of guilt, is, in its general features, applicable to every age, appears from what the Lord said in his heart after the flood, Gen. viii. 21, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." To the same purpose, in reference to a more advanced period of the history of the world, we read in the fourteenth Psalm, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Paul too quotes this passage in writing to the Romans, in order to prove that all are under sin. The earth on which we tread is polluted by the iniquity of its inhabitants; it is polluted with forgetfulness of him who made it—with positive violations of his laws—with impiety, idolatry, injustice, impurity, and blood. Everywhere does this character apply, in a more or less revolting

degree. Sin riots in savage, and rules in civilized life. It stalks abroad with unblushing front and clamorous voice in the crowded streets of the city; and it secretly corrupts the virtue and disturbs the peace of the sequestered vale and little hamlet. In short, and in the language of the Apostle John (1 John v. 19), "The whole world lieth in wickedness."

How, then, can there be rest in such a world as this? How can *they* be at rest who are themselves of the world, and in whom the world reigns with unsubdued power? How can they be at peace who are warring against heaven? How can they be securely calm, who, destitute of the anchor of celestial hope, are afloat on the billows of contending passions—the sport of every rising tempest? Impossible! "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Nay, how can they whose minds have been enlightened to see the evil of sin, and in whom its power is in a great measure broken, be at rest while living in such a world as this, and witnessing such scenes of carelessness and of iniquity all around them? In such a situation, instead of being capable of uninterrupted enjoyment, the believer must often be ready to say, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." This is a sentiment which grace inspires, and which God approves. "Go through the midst of the city," said the Most High to Ezekiel; "through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." The imperfections, too, in the believer *himself*, and the positive offences into which he sometimes falls, must often make him uneasy and restless. Deep convictions make him say with the Psalmist, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." The law in his members warring against the law in his mind, forces him to cry out with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Such penitential contrition, and such earnest longings, would entirely deprive him of rest, did not the consideration of gospel mercy, and the prospect of complete deliverance, enable him to add, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

When we consider, then, that our continuance here is short and uncertain—that while life lasts it is full of trouble and change—that even in its best state it is not a satisfying portion to the soul—and especially that it is characterized by the prevalence of sin—we may clearly see why

we never can have our rest here. In quest of rest on earth, the sinner may be compared to the unclean spirit mentioned in the gospel, that walked through dry places seeking rest, but found none; and the saint to Noah's dove, that could find no rest for the sole of her foot, till she returned to the ark.

Suffer me now,

II. To address to you the exhortation, "Arise ye, and depart."

Arise ye, and depart, in the spirit of your minds, and in 'the tenor of your conduct.

*1st, Arise and depart in the spirit of your minds.*

Arise! Bethink yourselves. Stir yourselves up to serious consideration. Shake off airy dreams and listless vacancy of mind; dwell on what is substantial: make a vigorous effort of thought; ponder well!

Arise and depart *from the idea that this world can give you rest.* Ever remember its evanescent and unsatisfactory nature. Seek not your portion in this life. Cease from loving the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Arise and depart *from all trust in yourselves.* "Lean not to thine own understanding. Cease from thine own wisdom." "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The Lord hides the great things of his gospel from the wise and prudent in their own conceit, and reveals them unto babes. Cease from seeking rest to your souls in your own righteousness; for God "will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding-place."

Arise and depart *from all trust in others.* Cease from all created confidences. Is thy heart affectionate and faithful? Hast thou one who is dearer to thee than all the world beside? Is thy life bound up in the life of thy friend? Cease to make him thy stay, lest thou forfeit the privileges of those who trust in the Lord, who hath said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Cease from leaning on the best and dearest of creatures, when there are so many instances of others who once like thee were blessed in the society of those they loved, but who now sit solitary and forlorn. "Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they who have wives," (and it may be

added, that they who have husbands, and parents, and children, and other relations, and friends), "be as though they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

My friends, the mind *must have something* whereon to rest. Without some prop, it would sink down into utter despondency. To know and to feel that certain objects never can satisfy the soul, is desirable; it is indeed an important preliminary to true satisfaction. But still this is not enough. Nay, were this all, the soul would be more unhappy than before; for that whereon it rested, and from which it derived a sensible though deceitful pleasure, would be withdrawn, while nothing else would be obtained in its room. In this state one would feel like Micah, when, deprived of his idols, he cried out, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more!" Hence, except in the case of absolute despair, which is more to be deprecated than any other, it is not to be expected that the man who is seeking his rest in the world, however he may yield the point in theory, will in reality, and from the heart, renounce his false hope; no man will renounce it unless he, at the same moment, receive another and a better hope in its place. It is in vain to suppose that mere accusatory argument, the argument of mere attack, can dislodge what has so powerful a hold on the affections, when these affections have nothing else whereon to fix, or expel from the heart that which fills it, when that heart, like all nature, abhors a vacuum. Can it be supposed that I shall willingly forego the only prop which, as far as I can see, can preserve my mind from a state of the most dismal prostration? Am I told that the pillars which support my house are very insufficient, and though they may stand a while, will certainly fail ere long? It may be so, but I shall not suffer them to be touched till I can make sure of better ones in their place. Were I hanging over the brink of a precipice, holding by a slender twig, which seemed just sufficient to bear me up in the spot for a short time, would any entreaties prevail on me to let go the twig, unless I could lay hold of a stronger branch, by which I might regain the summit in safety? Were I standing on a small mound of wasting earth, while the surrounding torrent rushed deep and increasing along, could I desire the mound to be entirely swept away, or could anything induce me to quit it, merely because it was insufficient? Could any consideration make me willing either to lose or to change the ground I occupied, but the consideration that I might reach a solid rock, or some other place of security? Exactly so it is in spiritual things, if I am seeking my rest in the world.

You tell me that I am in error—teach me then the truth! that I am in darkness—shew me then the light! You demonstrate to me my poverty—give me then the true riches! You say my love is misplaced—direct me then to an object supremely amiable, that can never be loved to excess! You say that I am engrossed with trifles—and I am sensible of it—but give me then something better! that I am in danger—and I tremble at the thought of it—lead me then to the place of refuge! that I am dissatisfied and miserable—alas! I am more so than you think—but tell me how I may be happy! O tell me what will bring this troubled heart to rest! It is not enough, my friends, to warn you against seeking your rest in the world; it is necessary, also, to point out positively where true rest is to be found. Without this, it were altogether useless to expatiate on the vanity of earthly things. Now, nothing is adequate to overthrow the power of this world's influence, but the direct proposal and acceptance of that substitute which the Gospel provides. What, then, in this view, is the substance of the Gospel? It is that which follows, and which, embodied in this exhortation, I would now most earnestly address to you, saying,

Arise ye and depart, and seek rest *directly from God in Christ*. God himself is the source of all happiness, and the centre of all rest. Why is it that we have been subjected to any trouble or disquietude, but because we have wandered from God—but because we have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water? Hence, it is only by returning to God, that we can recover our lost peace. Believe it, my friends, the eternal Jehovah, who is possessed of every perfection in himself, and who is the author of life to you, is the only satisfying portion, the only rest for your rational and immortal spirits. If He smile on you, all will be peace; if he frown, nothing can give you rest. “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.” Think not, however, that every vague idea of religion will bring true peace to your souls; but seek rest according to the plan of the gospel of the grace of God. Here it is that such a display is given of Divine mercy, wisdom, and justice, as, by the blessing of God and the teaching of his Holy Spirit, removes every ground of uneasiness, and satisfies the most scrupulous reasoner, that all who believe in Christ are safe for time and for eternity. Listen, then, to his gracious invitation, “Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Depart from all other resting places. Renounce all other grounds of hope. Arise and come to Jesus in faith and simple reliance. Venture on him, venture on him only—venture on him wholly—and God, who cannot lie, then warrants us to assure you that the peace of God, which passeth all

understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. True, solid, heartfelt satisfaction shall then be yours; you shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and he will make you drink of the river of his pleasures. There is, indeed, as already stated, no perfection, no absolute exemption from trouble, on earth; nevertheless, in the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews, iv. 3., they "who have believed do enter into rest"—that is, believers are at rest, when compared with those who are without God and without hope in the world; or, they have such a degree of present happiness, and they are so secure of future happiness, that they may, with propriety, be said to have already entered into rest. They enjoy peace of conscience—they calmly and thankfully acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence—they refresh themselves with the ordinances of grace, and they delight themselves in the Lord. Still afloat on the ocean of life, they do not expect that its billows should never rise; but having cast the anchor of hope both sure and steadfast within the veil, they shall ride out the storm, and enter at last the haven of eternal rest. Thus saith the Lord, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Arise ye, then, and depart, and seek rest directly from God in Christ. If you do this, every thing else will be easy; you will be prepared to yield a ready compliance when further exhorted to

Arise and depart and *set your hearts on heaven*. "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." As you "have here no continuing city, seek one to come." "Look for that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Arise, too, and depart in the spirit of your minds, so as to be willing literally to *depart from this life*—to leave the world altogether, whenever God shall call you. Cultivate that spirit of faith and hope, which, when death is comparatively at a distance, will sometimes fill you with a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; and which, when death shall actually arrive, will enable you to say, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Realize the hour when the Lord shall, as it were, say to you as he did to Joshua and the Israelites, "Arise, go over this Jordan, to the land which I do give you." Shrink not back from the rapidity, and the depth, and the darkness of the waters of the

river of death; but enter the flood, keeping fast hold of the hand of Him who, having himself abolished death, will bear you safe through to Canaan, that good and pleasant land.

*2d. Arise ye and depart in the tenor of your conduct.* See not only that your thoughts be rightly directed, and your affections properly placed, but also that you act a consistent part in what you avoid, and in what you follow after.

Arise and depart from all such pursuits as interfere with the concerns of eternity. Cease from what is on all hands acknowledged to be sinful. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "Depart ye, it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not," Sam. iv. 15. Depart from the pollutions of the world. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out thence, touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her." Isaiah, lii. 11. Depart from the society of the ungodly. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Arise and depart not only from the worst of men, but from the world in general, from all who are of the world, and who are seeking their rest in it. Not that you should decline the ordinary intercourse, and civility, and business of life, "for then must ye needs go out of the world;" but cease from making those your chosen associates who do not seem to be in earnest in the pursuit of the heavenly rest; cease from following their example, and from seeking satisfaction in their frivolous customs and dangerous compliances. Walk not: "according to the course of this world." "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Be not deterred by the disapprobation which such decision may bring on you from those who are really no proper judges in this matter; but, following steadily the path of duty, cheerfully entrust your happiness to your divine Master, who has said, "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." Arise and depart, and "Go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach," and be assured that "He will recompence to you who are troubled, rest with us." Cease, too, from excessive eagerness in the pursuit of worldly gain. Manage your affairs with prudence and diligence; but labour not for the meat that perisheth, so much as for that which endureth to everlasting life. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Lay not up for yourselves, therefore, treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where

neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal, For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Arise and depart, and be found *actively engaged* as becomes those who profess that this is not their rest. Not only cease to do evil, but also learn to do well. "Depart from evil and do good." Keep your face steadily directed towards Zion. Go on in the march of holy and useful living. "Arise and walk." "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Arise and be doing; and the Lord be with thee."

The exhortation thus to arise and depart, in the spirit of your minds, and in the tenor of your conduct, might be enforced by various arguments, but I would only beseech you seriously to attend to that in the text—"If you will not arise and depart, but are resolved on seeking only an earthly rest, the end of it will be your utter ruin; *it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction.*" Not a few alarming instances have occurred on earth, in which those who were living in sin, and engrossed by the world, have been quickly destroyed. There are still occasional instances of individuals visibly punished for their sins, and even cut off in their full strength, being wholly at their ease and quiet. The destruction of not a few is exactly represented by that of the foolish man, who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," but who that very night had his soul required of him. Now, though such visible judgments are comparatively rare, they ought to be considered as examples of what, sooner or later, must overtake all who have no hope but in this world. The deception may impose on them for a while, but the painful truth will ultimately force conviction. The bubble may float for a time in the air, with its varying and gaudy colours, but it will burst at last. The dream may continue even all their time on earth, but it will certainly be dissipated by a dread eternity. "As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so also (in reference both to death and judgment) shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Let those who seek no rest but this earth, remember that the earth itself is devoted to destruction. Let the scoffers who say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and affirm that the earth has never seen, and will never see, any change, know that as it was once covered by the deluge, so "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the Word of God are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and the perdition of ungodly men." And well may the destruction of the ungodly be called "a sore destruction." It is sore,



because it is sudden and inevitable. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." It is a sore destruction, because it is a destruction of the whole man, both soul and body. "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear, fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." It is a sore destruction, because its misery is very intense. It is the absence of all good, and the presence and pressure of all evil. It is a sore destruction, because it is an everlasting destruction. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they may be destroyed for ever." "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." How affecting the thought that this sore destruction is courted, or at least not shunned, by such multitudes! that multitudes are ripening for it by wilful ignorance, or proud unbelief, or daring impiety, or giddy amusement, or grasping worldliness, or careless, fatal indifference! Alas! "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat." "Many walk so that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, who mind earthly things." Yield, then, my friends, to the plain warning held forth to you. Be persuaded to arise and depart. "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins." "Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city" of wickedness and carnal ease. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed."

III. I come, *lastly*, to speak to three different classes of persons.

My friends, you have either left the world, and already found that rest in the favour of God here, which is a pledge of perfect rest in his immediate presence hereafter; or you are still seeking your rest in the world; or you are so far under religious concern that you have lost your former rest, but neither have found, nor are earnestly seeking the other. This enumeration must include all now present, and to each of these classes I would speak a word in concluding.

1st, We congratulate those of you who have ceased to seek your rest in the world—who have arisen and gone to God through Jesus Christ for rest, and who enjoy in a good measure that tranquillity which is the fore-runner of endless peace. Say if you have ever repented the choice which you have made? Are you sorry that the light of Divine truth

has dispelled the vain illusions of time and sense? Do you regret any little sacrifices you may have been called on to make in this cause? Do you feel as if the renunciation of what you have seen to be hurtful or dangerous were any hardship? or as if any thing which Christian piety and prudence forbid were necessary to your enjoyment of life, or even consistent with your peace? When you have been at times subjected to trials painful to flesh and blood, has ever your Master forgotten his promise, that as your day is so your strength should be? or failed to impart a comfort which overbalanced all—a joy with which no stranger could intermeddle—a peace which the world could neither give nor take away? Well, is there any thing besides that deserves to be called happiness? Is there any rest on earth to be compared with this? Endeavour, then, to preserve this rest. Rely habitually on that Saviour who first brought peace to your souls; and whenever your tranquillity is lost, as will sometimes happen, let your past experience teach you how alone that tranquillity may be recovered, and lead you to say effectually with David, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

Recollect, however, that you are only on the way to perfect happiness. You are yet strangers and pilgrims on earth. Your journey is begun, but not finished. You are escaped from Egypt, but you are still in the wilderness. You have departed from the “city of destruction,” but you have not reached the celestial city. It is necessary, not only to have set out well, but to persevere. Let nothing tempt you to say, “It were better for us to return to Egypt.” “Fear lest a promise being left you of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short.” Continue to prosecute the journey in a right manner. Endeavour to receive as little injury, and as few stains as possible, from the dangers and defilements of the way. Though not of the world, you are in the world. Though no longer of the party of the rebels, you have not yet got beyond the reach of their annoyance. Though not enemies to God, you are still in his enemies’ country, and, therefore, still exposed to their snares, and their attacks, while Satan himself is casting at you his fiery darts, and striving in every way to arrest your progress. Reject all their flattering invitations; be not led away with the error of the wicked; keep yourselves unspotted from the world. Resist all their desperate assaults; be stedfast in the faith, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and fight your way through.

Endure also, without murmuring, the hardships of the way, remembering that such hardships are necessary to prevent you from sitting down contented, and are, therefore, marks of the Divine wisdom and goodness. Avail yourselves, meanwhile, of the refreshment provided,

with joy drawing water out of the wells of salvation. And press forward steadily to the end of your journey, animated by the prospect before you—the prospect of the end of all your toils—of the fulfilment of all your wishes—of the perfection of all your joys—of dwelling in the house of God for ever. Then shall the happiness be yours of which the Holy Ghost thus speaks, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

2d, You who are still seeking your rest on earth! You may know that this is your state from a slight consideration of your temper and conduct. The question is not, whether you ever think of futurity, or pay any outward attention to the ordinances of religion; but what is it that has the *chief* place in your hearts and pursuits—the body or the soul—the world or the Saviour—time or eternity? If you are not yet fully persuaded of the insufficiency of earthly things; if you still have any trust in yourselves; if your ultimate dependence be on any creature; if you have not heartily renounced every other hope but that of free mercy through the Redeemer; if, as the natural result of the unrenewed mind, you are following a course of life, which is either plainly irreligious and immoral, or which, though more guarded, permits you on the whole to look no farther than this life; and if your rest be of such a nature that it is most profound when the thought of Divine things is kept at a distance, but disturbed when the plain truth is urged on your attention, then you may certainly conclude that you are seeking your rest here. The world, in its pleasures, or gains, or honours, or something else, is the leading object of your desire and pursuit. To this tend your plans by day, and your dreams by night, your most anxious thoughts, and most persevering endeavours. Well, and after all, what is the real amount of the rest which you possess? The most that can be said of it is this, Give you whatever you desire, give you something agreeable here, and you are in some measure satisfied; deny you this, and you are left without resource. Not that, even in the most prosperous state, your peace of mind is free from interruption; at least if there be such a case, it is hopeless beyond others. Boast not of your happiness. Tell us not of your cheerfulness, and joy, and exemption from gloomy care. We know that you are often thus elated; but we also know that the outward appearance is not always the genuine index of the heart: we know that sometimes, even in seasons of bustling activity and apparent gaiety, your spirits can hardly bear up; and that there are moments of leisure, when conscience, long asleep, begins to awake, when you are

haunted with the fear that the foundation on which you rest, will not bear examination, and when nothing can ward off the apprehension that as you are neglecting your salvation, and walking in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes—for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

We appeal to yourselves if this be not the fact. Now, do not imagine that these misgivings of mind proceed from mere constitutional melancholy, or weakness of reason, or groundless alarm. No, they are perfectly rational and well-founded. They are conscience responding to the truth. They are intended to awaken you to your true interest, and to lead you to seek rest where alone it is to be found. Arise, then, and depart. Let each of you say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father;" and you may depend on receiving the same gracious welcome. Seek God where he is to be found; in the place where he delights to dwell. "Arise and go up to Bethel." To-day is this scripture fulfilling in your ears. "The watchman upon the mount shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God." "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the way; stand, see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." But if you shall say, "We will not walk therein," "neither will we hearken" to the sound of the trumpet; if you shall harden yourselves in your worldliness, and sink down in the deep lethargy of carnal security; be it known to you that even the feeble support you have, shall utterly fail; your hope shall be cut off—your trust shall be as a spider's web; the house, while you lean on it, shall give way with all its pillars—the world itself, to which you looked for rest, will not only disappoint you, but destroy you with a sore destruction. Nay, the gracious and holy God, whose mercies you have abused, and whose invitations you have disregarded, will "swear in his wrath that you shall *never* enter into his rest. Yet how can the watchman give you up, or cease to sound the alarm in your ears? Wo to you who "lade yourselves with thick clay," and are "at rest in your possessions." "Wo to the crown of pride," to the garland of the "drunkards, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower." "Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit." "Wo to them that go down to Egypt for help,—but look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord." "Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." Wo to all of you who are "at ease in Zion." Arise, ye careless men, who are immersed in toil and trouble, but who neglect the one thing needful. "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech: else

many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women." "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction."

*Finally*, Are there not some of you who are so far under concern that *you have lost your former rest, but have not found another?* The steps by which you have been led to this state have no doubt been various. This may have been simply the effect of the truth, without any thing remarkable in providential dispensations. More probably, some of the objects which once gave you supreme delight, have, though not removed, been embittered to you; the imperfections and troubles of the persons and things of this life, have been the gall and the wormwood which the hand of the Almighty has been mixing with the intoxicating cup, to render it less pleasant to your taste. Or it may be that as some of your earthly attainments were so strong, that repeated disappointments made no impression on you, and nothing could make you voluntarily let go your hold, God has therefore altogether taken away from you the objects of your idolatrous regard. The prosperity of your circumstances may have received a check—your health may be impaired—your friend may be removed by death—and all your prospects may be clouded. To such things as these may have been added the consideration of your sinful and dying condition, and other awakening topics, which you dwelt on in private, or had pressed on your attention in public, while the Spirit of God may have begun to deal with you. The effect of the whole is, that you have lost your peace, and that you can no longer find contentment in the world. Its good things cannot satisfy you—its deceptions cannot impose on you—its amusements cannot amuse you—its pleasures cannot please you—its cordials cannot raise your spirits—nor its anodynes mitigate your pain.

What advice, then, ought we to give to you who are in this state of mind? Shall we advise you to make another trial of what you have already proved to be ineffectual? to return to the world in order to drown your cares in its whirling vortex? No. We most solemnly warn you against those who would pretend that such anxiety is a proof of a weak and superstitious mind—who would attempt to laugh you out of your scruples, and who would endeavour to bring you back to a state of wilful ungodliness, or at least of contented indifference. Far be from us the attempt to re-establish your tranquillity, by removing the most hopeful symptom in your case—to allay your restlessness, by administering an opiate so malignantly powerful as would sink you into the sleep of death.

By every thing valuable to you as immortal creatures, we beseech you no more to go in quest of peace to a quarter where you have been so often deceived. What solid advantage have you ever reaped in that way? "What fruit had ye, then, in those things whereof ye are now" beginning to be "ashamed? for the end of these things is death." As little need ye ever hereafter expect to find fruit in those polluted regions whose trees are withering under the curse of the Almighty. Nay, should you return to seek rest in the world, you will not only be disappointed, but you will be in danger of perishing under the aggravated guilt of having stifled your convictions and quenched the Spirit. If, after you have escaped the pollutions of the world, you be again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end will be worse with you than the beginning.

As we would not have you to look again to the world for rest, so neither would we have you to remain where you are. You are advanced so far as to be deprived of rest, but you have not advanced far enough to be happy: why not proceed another step, and lay hold of those consolations which will never fail? In order to this, it is necessary that you do indeed receive the gospel, and positively join the company of pilgrims. If you would have the security of God's people, you must occupy their ground. You cannot expect the peace and joy of confirmed disciples, if you continue hesitating and irresolute, "Let not him that wavereth think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." "Ye cannot serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Are you, then, longing for deliverance from this distressing inquietude? and are you ready to cry out with the Psalmist, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest?" Know assuredly that rest can only be found in the way of thorough determination, and of an entire surrender to the grace and government of the Redeemer. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" If you would be happy, be decided. Abandoning, from the very heart, all those false refuges from which, one after another, you feel yourselves driven, yield yourselves up without reserve to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has pledged his word that he will give you rest. In full reliance on his merits, and in the steady prosecution of the spiritual journey, you will even now enjoy a fixedness and satisfaction of mind to which you have hitherto been strangers, and in due time you will arrive at that blessed country from which disappointment, and restlessness, and painful longings, shall be completely and eternally excluded. God grant that this may be your happy decision; and to his name be all praise, now and ever, AMEN.

## SERMON XXIV.

CHRIST'S YOKE EASY TO THE SUBJECTS OF HIS KINGDOM.

BY THE REV. JOHN MACFARLANE, DALKEITH.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—MATT. xi. 30.

YES, BRETHREN, it is so! These are the words of the faithful and true Witness. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light; but in a sense different from that in which it is generally understood by the world. This is one of the declarations of Scripture that is apt to be perverted and misapplied by men, who would make the requirements of Christ easy, by bringing them down to the level of their own natural capacities or sinful inclinations. With unscriptural and superficial views of the nature and extent of Christian obedience, they would employ the language which was designed to soothe and comfort the faint but still pursuing disciple, to extenuate their love of the world, to excuse their sloth and self-indulgence, or even to justify their carelessness and sin.

Here, says the cold and formal professor, whose name is enrolled among the friends of Christ, but whose heart is with the world—here is the text for me. Let men speak as they may about the difficulties, conflicts and trials of the Christian life, I have found none of them. According to the representation of its author himself, religion, even such a religion as He enjoins, is at once easy and pleasant. Christ makes no exorbitant demands upon his followers. He imposes no heavy restraints. There is no undue strictness in his prohibitions or commands. Although, therefore, I make no great sacrifice of personal ease or present enjoyment, and have no pretensions to goodness above my neighbours, I may surely hope that I shall not be disowned by him, who Himself declares, that His yoke is easy, and his burden light. Thus does a gay and an unthinking world construct for themselves a cross of amber—a light and ornamental material which they may almost unconsciously carry about with them, and which, while it indicates profession, neither reminds them of suffering, nor burdens them with its weight.

But look ~~our~~ into the Bible. In every page we see evidence fitted

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to undeceive those who have taken up such an impression of what it is to be a Christian. Is not the first lesson, which every disciple in the school of Christ must learn, to deny himself and take up his cross and follow his master? When he has made his entrance upon the Christian course, is he not taught to expect that not only strait shall be the gate, but that narrow shall continue to be the way that leadeth unto life? Are not the diligence and laborious perseverance of the husbandman—the watchfulness and vigour of the soldier—the strenuous efforts of the racer, animated by the surrounding spectators, and cheered with the prospect of the prize—are not these some of the emblems employed in Scripture to represent the carefulness and assiduity demanded of every follower of Jesus?

Is Christ's yoke not easy then? Is there not force and meaning in his own words? Yes, most assuredly; but it is easy only to them who, having heard his voice, have come unto him at his call, and who have thus received the will, the grace, the strength, to take it upon them, and to bear it. A thing is easy to be done just in proportion to the power of doing it. It is easy for a man to lift a weight which a child could not move from the ground. It is easy for the bird to soar into the atmosphere, and for the fish to make its way through the waters; their natures are suited to their respective elements; but it were impossible for man to do either. So, in the spiritual world, what becomes natural and easy to a believing and renewed soul, is impossible to a sinner in his carnal state. What is impossible to nature, is easy to grace.

That the true meaning and practical influence of our text may, by the blessing of God, be understood and felt by us, let us attend for a moment to what is implied in the yoke and burden which Christ requires his disciples to bear. For, how easy and light soever that yoke and burden may be, the language means something, and it cannot mean less, than subjection, restraint, and persevering fealty and obedience.

The yoke is the well known emblem of subjection to the power of a conqueror. Nations vanquished in war, were sometimes made by their haughty victors to pass under the yoke. And this was a form of expression to which the ears of the Jews were familiar, as having been employed by their prophets to represent bondage and captivity. A burden, too, is a no less expressive emblem of servitude and restraint. It is borne, not for personal gratification, but at the will of a master. And both the yoke and the burden which Christ imposes, are expressions which imply, not occasional acts of homage; not a Sabbath day's service; not a morning and evening prayer; but a habitual, steady, sustained recognition of his authority and obedience to his will.

The language of our text, viewed in connection with other representa-



tions of Scripture, instructs us, that they who have taken Christ's yoke and burden upon them, have first of all been subdued by his grace. They have given in, and received the victor. The citadel of their hearts has been assailed and taken by the gracious King who is set upon the holy hill of Zion. They are not their own, they are Christ's. If the rebellious will has not been altogether subjugated, it has been brought habitually under his control. If the soul, once dead, has not attained the maturity of the spiritual life, it has at least been made spiritually alive. The heavenly conqueror has made to himself a willing people in the day of his power. His authority is regarded as the rule, his love as the motive, his example as the model, his glory as the end of the service yielded by them, who carry the badge of subjection to their heavenly King.

Now, we go on to observe, that, in reference to such, Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light,—1st, *Because, having come to Christ, they have received the willing mind to bear it.* This you observe is the order of things required by Christ in the passage before us. His invitation is just, Come unto me—that is, believe on me—give your hearts to me; and then, taking my yoke upon you, you will find it easy; for you will love the Master, and you will love his service. . . But men sadly reverse this order, or they attempt to take up the burden without reference to the previous invitation at all. They are thus soon tempted to break the bands of subjection to Christ altogether; or they modify the form and pressure of the yoke in a way entirely contrary to the will of their Master; or, they sink into a state of discouragement and perplexity under its insupportable weight. This, brethren, is by no means wonderful. They would mount up with the wings of the eagle, but they have no wings. They would run, but they have no feet. The moral precepts of the New Testament enjoin purity of heart, integrity of purpose, consistency, elevation, and spirituality of character—forbid every unholy wish, every sinful propensity, every forming emotion of evil—and call for the constant imitation of a pattern of unrivalled excellence. While all this may be acknowledged as most desirable and lovely, it is utterly at variance with the tastes and dictates of the fallen heart. To give religion a certain measure of regard—to let it have what they choose to call its own share of their time and attention—seems to men reasonable enough. But to fear the Lord always—to love him with the whole heart—to glorify him in all things—to live every hour and minute of every day as seeing him who is invisible—to pray without ceasing; this, to the natural man who is of the earth, earthy, is to drag a heavy and an ever-lengthening chain. For, every step he advances, while his will and affections are rivetted down to the earth, the extent of the require-

ment becomes more visible, while he has no greater disposition or moral power to obey.

In religion, brethren, as in all things else, if we would find the way plain and pleasant, we must begin at the beginning. And this is the beginning of the Christian walk,—“I,” saith the Saviour, “am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” Entering by this the true door, which is opened by the hand of faith, and advancing along the path which is trode by the foot of faith, the will and the strength are supplied by the Spirit of Christ to prosecute the heavenward journey. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Union to him causes the old will, the hard heart, the downward affections to pass away, and all things to become new. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. He wills what Christ wills. He delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man. He is transferred from a connection with an old and earthly, into a union with a new and spiritual covenant head; and from that point, the most momentous in the history of a redeemed soul, it begins, according to its spiritual nature, to bring forth fruit unto God.

Hence do you see, how, and why it is that Christ's yoke is easy. They who are impelled by fear to relinquish a course they love—they who yield a constrained obedience to the duties they are averse to perform—find that the command of Christ is a burden too grievous to be borne. But let me once hear with the ear of faith the voice of Christ saying, “Come unto me,” and a new era in my spiritual existence is begun. I have received the willing mind, which is the moral power to obey. It is easy to serve a master whom we love. When my eye, therefore, is opened to see the King in his beauty, to behold the combination of every rare and Divine quality in Him, who is the sum and centre of all excellence, the source and completion of all good, then shall the knee be bowed before him, not in an unwilling or formal homage, but as expressive of the loyalty of the heart. It is easy to serve a generous benefactor, and when I have been brought to feel my obligation to redeeming love—to know that Christ became poor, that I might be made rich; that he endured the curse, that I might obtain the blessing; that He died, that I might live; that He was crowned with thorns, that I might be crowned with glory—then, no service, no devotedness shall be deemed too complete, to give utterance to the gratitude that warms my bosom. It is easy to do what we love to do, and the renewed heart loves dearly to follow Christ, loves to be like Him, loves to be fitted to be with Him, to see and to share his glory. And if, beloved brethren, you know anything of the feeling of the devout Psalmist when he says—“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so  
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panteth my soul after God, the living God," then do you know in your own experience, better than tongue can tell, that Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light.

2d, The yoke and burden of Christ are easy and light, to such as we have described, *because there is a pure satisfaction imparted to their mind, even in the very exercises of self-denial and self-abasement which He enjoins.* By an exclusive attention to the preceding observations, we might be led to suppose that there was no struggle or opposition at all to be encountered in the way of Christian obedience. But every believer knows that it is not so. There is a warfare to carry on—a race to run—so that we may obtain. This arises, not from anything in the command of Christ, which an innocent or holy creature would feel it an effort or a sacrifice to obey. It arises from the depravity and sinfulness of man. When two elements of an opposite nature meet, the one contends with the other, till the more powerful prevail. Thus, water will quench the fire, or the fire will dry up and dissipate the water. The saving grace of God in the heart of man cannot subsist in union with sin that has a previous empire there. Grace assaults sin, wounds it, slays it—but not without a protracted conflict. The breath of sin does not expire but with the breath of life. The soul of man is the arena of this contest. The believing sinner is the subject of that grace, which quickens, strengthens, sustains him to fight the good fight of faith, and to obtain the victory. Hence the many admonitions of Scripture, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to crucify the flesh, to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

But while the subject of Christ's kingdom is appointed to such service as this, and while, in some sense, it is a hard and painful service, what after all is he doing? He is rooting out the enemies of his soul—he is breaking the chains of his captivity—he is removing the barriers in his path to the true perfection of his nature. As each successively yields to the force of that new and holy principle that has been implanted within him, he enjoys the happiness of a triumph unmixed with the insolence of conquest, for he is ever ready to say, "Not I, but the grace of God that was in me." And if, brethren, the pleasure of victory is proportioned to the strength and malignity of the enemy subdued, how pleasing and how pure must be the emotion awakened in the soul which, by Divine grace, has overcome the enemies that would have degraded and enslaved it for ever? Though there is thus, therefore, a struggle continually going on in the soul of a believer—the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh—it is the conflict of light with darkness—it is the war of holiness against sin—it is the moving of the Eternal Spirit upon the confused and refractory elements of our depraved estate—to

raise a new and fair creation from the ruins of the fall. And who would compare the security and deadness that reigns in the unrenewed soul—the stillness of that night of spiritual darkness which the light of truth has never visited—the degradation of that spiritual bondage that has extinguished even the desire to be free—who would compare such a state with the generous strife in which the believer is engaged, even while the conflict lasts, and in which he shall finally be more than a conqueror?

Nor are those exercises of mind which arise from a view of personal unworthiness and deficiency entirely of a painful nature. Having been taught to aspire to a high standard of excellence—having been brought to feel their guilt and helplessness—the servants of Christ cannot indeed indulge in that self-complacency which is the result of insensibility and ignorance. But when you hear the language of complaint poured forth by the people of God on account of imperfections which no human eye can detect—“My soul cleaveth to the dust;” when you see the tear of penitence, or hear the voice of prayer, in reference to sins of which none but themselves know the nature and aggravations—“Cleanse thou me from secret faults;” when you observe them bowed down in deep self-abasement before the Majesty of heaven—“I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes;” when you listen to the sigh of holy expectation, breathed after blessings, which, having been taught to value, they long to attain—“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his temple;” O think not that, in such a frame of mind, they are unhappy. These are the aspirings of the heaven-born soul to the excellency of its nature. There is a calm and hallowed blessedness enjoyed, which they would not forego for all that the world calls good. And mark the end. This is the gray and sombre twilight—the morning of the celestial day which is soon to shed the full effulgence of its noon-tide glory on the soul.

3d, Christ's yoke, too, is easy and his burden light, *because his presence is promised to be with his servants to make it easy and light.* He does not leave them to carry the burden alone. “My presence shall go with thee.” There is far more force in this consideration than they can allow, who, engrossed with the objects of sense, can realise nothing that they do not see. Faith, brethren, gives evidence and reality to things not seen. Did it not comfort the hearts of the disciples, when, tossed upon the waters of the Sea of Galilee during a dark and tempestuous night, they recognised their Master, and heard his voice saying unto them, “Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid?” Did it not support and enliven the spirit of the martyr Stephen, when, amid his cruel sufferings, “he beheld the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” And as truly as Christ was pre-

sent with his people then, he is present with his people now. It is not a subtle, indefinable, cheerless influence of which they are the subjects. It is Christ himself that is with them. "Lo I am with you always."

The knowledge of an earthly friend being with us, is sweet and sustaining. If the way of duty involve difficulty and self-denial, his presence and counsel are encouraging and comforting. But in bearing the yoke of Christ the believer's satisfaction is immeasurably greater than this. He enjoys the conscious presence of his Saviour and God. Christ is with his people as they advance on their journey, cheering them by his approval, as they wear the badge of subjection to Him, and carry the burden He has imposed. They see him not indeed with the bodily eye, but he is visible to the eye of their faith. His rod and staff comfort them. The accents of his tender and directing voice, fall upon their inward ear. The consciousness of his presence mingles with the secret feelings, and guides the purposes, and calms the perturbations of their souls. And if, brethren, the sympathy of human friendship, even when it cannot relieve, and the voice of human council, even when it can give forth only a feeble and hesitating utterance, has often shed a ray of light along some dark and intricate passage of man's earthly sojourning—shall not the consciousness of His presence enlighten and cheer the bosom of his servants?

4th, Let it be further remarked, that *this yoke ever becomes easier, and this burden lighter, as the Christian continues to bear it.* It is related of a slave in ancient times, of great sagacity and wisdom, that upon the different burdens being allotted to himself and his companions in setting out upon a journey, he chose to carry the provisions of the party, which others were unwilling to do; for, although the burden was heavier at first, he foresaw that it would be diminished in weight at each successive stage. The same wise choice would have been made by him, had he been assured upon testimony he could trust, that by the communication of new strength in the course of his journey, the burden which remained in itself the same, would become lighter in his perception in consequence of his greater power to bear it, until its pressure totally disappeared. It is this latter supposition that illustrates the case before us. There is nothing analogous to the subtraction of any part of the burden which Christ prescribes. His yoke and burden are ever the same. There is no change of the nature, no abatement of the spirituality and extent of his requirements. Nor will habit in this case ever reconcile the natural mind to what is distasteful. Habit of external duty may make an inveterate formalist, never a devout believer. But, whatever to his own servants is of the nature of a burden in the obedience Christ enjoins, is so wholly in consequence of their

spiritual weakness and deficiency. In heaven, all is indeed allegiance and love. But there is no self-denial there. No yoke is worn by the saints there. No burden is borne by the angels there. Nothing that indicates restraint or endurance appears there. And, as the pilgrim advances in his journey and approaches his home—as his will becomes one with the will of his master—as the inward man is renewed day by day—the conscious weight of the burden gradually diminishes, until he arrive at the point when it disappears—when the yoke and the burden are converted into the ornament and the crown.

The illustration of this subject were incomplete did I omit to observe, *finally*, That *Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light, in comparison with that which must otherwise be borne.* It is an alternative, brethren, which Christ here proposes to you—if you bear not mine, you bear a heavier burden. Comparatively to that under which you must sink, and languish, and die, my yoke is easy, and my burden light. He casts his compassionate eye upon a world enslaved by sin, and darkened by sorrow. He sees the children of men weary and heavy laden with a burden that oppresses and crushes them to the dust. Not one among them all is free. They are wearing the iron yoke of a cruel oppressor. They are bound with the chains of a hopeless captivity. All, without exception, are condemned. Some are the slaves of filthy lucre; some are the victims of lust; some are the votaries of intemperance; and some are the prisoners of sloth. Some he beholds heedlessly and carelessly wearing the badge of their degrading servitude. Some making a few slight and fruitless efforts to be free, but soon sinking deeper into the dungeon of the conqueror. The blessed Jesus sees many a bosom pierced with disappointment without a remedy, many a wound where there is no balm to heal, many a heart broken with bereavement and sorrow without a cure. He beholds men, whatever may be their variety of condition, at one in this—that they are under the yoke of the god of this world, whose bondage is hard and relentless, and whose wages is death. And listen to his gracious voice: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bound.” In comparison, therefore, to the cruel servitude in which sinners are held, Christ's yoke is deliverance, his burden is liberty.

Exult not, therefore, sinners, in your imagined freedom! Do you really affect to pity the restraint to which *they* submit, who have taken upon them the yoke of Christ? Ah! how misplaced your pity. Did you know the truth, you would weep for yourselves. They are the freemen, you are the slaves. You have sin as your sovereign master, Satan as your uncontrolled tyrant; they have sin as their vanquished enemy,

and Christ as their gracious King. You have a weight of sorrow to bear for which you can find little alleviation, and no comforter; they have a solace for every grief, and a balm for every wound. You carry about with you a load of unpardoned guilt, which is ever accumulating till it press you down into hell; they bear a burden of conscious infirmity, which is gradually diminishing till it disappear in heaven. And will you not, O sinner, cast your heavy burden upon Christ? Will you still go on to bear it, regardless of His call? You need rest—will you not take the rest He gives? It is his voice that speaks to you—will you not believe him when he tells you tidings delightful to a weary sinner's ears, that his yoke and burden, far other than that under which you now groan, is easy and light.

And to you, believers, the subject speaks the language of encouragement, and tells you why so little comfort is enjoyed even by you. You have indeed made the good choice, the choice enjoined by Christ, approved by God, which gladdens the heart of angels. You have heard the voice of Christ, have taken his yoke upon you, and have received in some good measure the willing mind, the moral power to bear it. Even in the self-denial and self-abasement which it implies, you know something of the blessedness of those who sorrow after a godly sort. Christ is with you to lighten the burden and to cheer the way. Time, which renders all other burdens more oppressive, is relieving you of the weight of yours. And you have been delivered from a bondage, in comparison of which your yoke is liberty. Still, Christian brethren, you are not completely happy. In this world, perhaps this may never be. This is the time to bear the cross, heaven is the place to wear the crown. But you will be the happier on the way, the more thoroughly you are imbued with the spirit of Jesus. You know he will be nothing to you unless he is everything. Make him you all in all. Revere him, love him, trust in him as your friend. Seek him, and you will find him to be your guide and your comforter. Receive him, and follow him into the beauties of holiness. He imparts not his pure joy to the soul that shuts him out from its confidence. If Christ is to become the source of happiness at all, the whole soul must be yielded to his love.

## SERMON XXV.

## RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS.

(Preached at the opening of the Free Synod of Perth, 16th April 1844.)

BY THE REV. ANDREW GREY, PERTH.

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division."  
—LUKE xii. 51.

MY BRETHREN, here is surely a startling declaration. Can there have been any mistake in regarding Christianity as the religion of peace? Division! Is division the proper fruit of our holy faith? What is the meaning of this? The text seems to combat a wrong idea; and the error it assails consists in supposing that Christ came to give peace on earth. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division." And these words are spoken by the Prince of Peace. Yea, Jesus also says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. x. 34.) "I am come to send fire on the earth:—from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law." (Luke xii. 49, 52, 53.) Such was the marvellous language of Him concerning whose advent the seraphic anthem had proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men!" Were the angels deceived? We must look into this mystery. Our Lord tells us in the text what his mission is to do; and it is clear, from what he says, that the truth upon that point is more complex and extensive than is sometimes imagined. An enquiry into the whole truth regarding it will be a fitting commencement of the discussion of our present subject.

1. Let us enquire, then, into the Scripture doctrine with regard to the effects or consequences of the mission of Christ.

Christ's mission into our world has two sets of effects. There are its effects upon *the Christian believer*, and its effects upon *human society*.



1. There are its effects upon the true believer of the gospel. These are manifold and great. It is impossible here to speak of them at length. But in order to the object we have in view, they may be exhibited in the following four particulars, which perhaps will be found to be more or less comprehensive of them all.

1st, Let us take, in the first place, the effect upon the believer *in respect of his relation to God*. That effect is peace. Our text was never meant to deny it. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Saviour came to bear the curse—to take away the wrath—to mediate between God and sinners, so that the child of wrath might become a member of God's blessed family. He saw men separated by their iniquities from the friendship of God, and lying under just condemnation. He pitied their miserable case. He saw them ready to perish through the anger of the holy Sovereign of all. His errand was to appease that anger, and to save them from it for ever. It was not in vain that he interposed. He satisfied justice—he expiated sin—he redressed the wrongs of the law—and made peace for his people. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." There is condemnation to others. "The wrath of God abideth" on them that do not believe. But such as are in Him have "peace from God the Father." He gives them that peace. "Peace," he has said, "I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

2d, Consider, in the second place, the effect upon the believer *as regards his own dispositions and feelings*. Here also it is peace. "The fruit of the Spirit is peace." "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Christ came to take the bitterness and enmity out of our hearts, and to reconcile us to God. He came, not only to pacify justice towards his people, but also to pacify them towards God. There is hostility, there is war, against the truth, the perfections, the great work of God, in every sinner's heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God. But Christ slays that enmity. He puts an end to that unnatural and impious war. He makes the weapons of rebellion to drop from the sinner's hands. He gives the spirit of amity and love to every one that believes. Changing the dispositions of his people, he turns them to God. They no longer stand aloof—they no longer oppose. As the hart for the water brooks, they thirst for God. They come to God—they walk with God—they joy in God as their portion. Through the Spirit of adoption, wherewith he fills them, they cry unto God, Abba, Father. Is the conscience of a sinner troubled and clamorous from a sense of guilt—is his soul distracted by the terrors of the Lord? There is peace for his conscience, there is deliverance

and rest for his soul, in Jesus. The Saviour speaks peace to his folk. He sprinkles them with his blood, and their fears pass away; the alarms that shook them are felt no more, and quietness and assurance succeed.

3d, In the third place, attend to the effect upon the believer *with reference to his fellow-believers*. Again the effect is peace. He is united to them in love. Christ came to gather around him a body of disciples, and to form them into a family, of which he is the elder brother, the Head in whom they all rejoice, and through whom they have pleasant fellowship together. The consequence is, that each of them is allied to all the rest; there is one body, and one Spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.

4th, Notice, lastly, the effect upon the believer *with reference to them that are without*. True it is that Christ came to draw a people for himself out of the world. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," is indeed his call to every sinner to whom the gospel is preached. And the believer is one who has obeyed that call. But the believer is not the enemy of those he has forsaken. On the contrary he was never truly their friend until he forsook them. While unsaved himself, he cared not for their salvation. But he pities them now. Christ has taught him to pity them. We are told that "The Spirit and the Bride say, come." The Bride, that is, the Church of believers, says come! Come, ye perishing, come to Jesus! Come and receive salvation! Come, ye rebels, who have provoked the wrath of God; the olive branch of peace is extended to you; come, and be forgiven, and reconciled, and made kings and priests unto God!

Such, then, are the effects of the Redeemer's mission, as exemplified in the case of believers. We find not in them anything that corresponds with the declaration in the text. Still that declaration must be true. Let us continue our search. Let us go on to consider its effects upon human society.

2. The effects, or consequences, upon human society, may be divided into *ultimate* and *immediate*.

1st, Those that are *ultimate*. They are of the happiest kind. The description in the passage from which our text is taken does not suit them at all. Scripture portrays them in most attractive terms. "The mountains," we are told, "shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before

him ; all nations shall serve him." "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed." (Ps. xxxii. 3, 6-7, 10-11, 17.) "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. ii. 4.) "The wolf, also, shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people ; to it shall the Gentiles seek ; and his rest shall be glorious." (Is. xi. 6-10.) How illustrious and blessed shall that time be ! The prediction of the angels shall be verified, and on earth there shall be peace.

2d, The *immediate* consequences. When we look into these, far different scenes present themselves. It is here, undoubtedly, that we must seek for the fulfilment of our Lord's remarkable words. But we must distinguish.

*First*, An immediate consequence of the mission of Jesus is the very opposite of division. *Wicked confederacies* are occasioned by it. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The potentates of the world lay aside their mutual jealousies, and cease from their bloody wars with each other, in order that they may unite their forces against the Messiah, to thwart him in his great work of mercy, to bring trouble and disaster on his kingdom, and to overset his throne ! Rival factions bury their enmities, and direct the course of their united rage against Jesus and his feeble followers. Pharisees and Sadducees cry together, "Away with him ; crucify him." Herod and Pontius Pilate join hands over his grave.

But, *secondly*, and to come at last to the doctrine of the text, *division and strife among men* are also immediate results of the mission of our Lord. His solemn language on the subject can have no other meaning. Enough has been said to show that there is no real discrepancy between this and the statements which tell of peace, and love, and happiness, as the fruits of his work, and the blessings of his glorious reign. And this, beyond dispute, is what he teaches when he says, "Suppose ye that I am come to

give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division." "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

II. Having thus arrived at the subject which the text brings before us, and having ascertained what place, among the effects of Christ's mission, belongs to that particular effect of it which we have now to consider, we go on to advert to *some Scripture examples of the feuds and broils which Jesus foretold.*

The schisms and dissensions which our Lord sends on the earth may be classified. They are to be found *in families, among friends and companions, in the general community, and in the visible Church.*

1. *In families.* An example is furnished in the family circle of Jesus himself. His brethren, we are told, did not believe in him. (John vii. 1-10.) His own kinsmen took umbrage at his doctrine and claims. At the very time when he was shunning publicity, because the Jews sought his life, they tauntingly urged him to leave his retreat, insinuating that it was inconsistent to put forth the pretensions he made, and not appear at the head of his followers; and hinting, that, if he was in earnest, and really was what he professed to be, he would not stay in the remote district of Galilee, but would go into Judea, and show himself to the world.

An instance of alienation in its earliest stage occurs in the case of the man who was born blind. The irritated Pharisees had summoned his parents to give testimony regarding the miracle of his cure. His parents knew well that a great miracle had been wrought upon him by Jesus; but, with the fear of expulsion from the synagogue before their eyes, they shrunk from an honest confession of the truth, and left their intrepid son, if he would not play the disingenuous part they had done, to bear all the odium and the penalty alone. "He is of age," said they, "ask him; let him speak for himself." He did speak for himself—and honestly and boldly did he speak. The consequence was, that his parents and he were ecclesiastically separated. They remained uncensured, and did not forfeit their privileges; while he, for his confession of Jesus, was cast out of the synagogue. (John ix.)

2d, Christ makes strife *among friends and companions.* An instance occurred in the case of himself and his disciples. There were many who were attracted by the fame of his miracles, and who, on beholding the wonders of his power, attached themselves to him as adherents of his cause; but of these, a large proportion were offended when his doctrines began to be unfolded; and, rather than embrace what he delivered, went back, and walked with him no more. (John vi. 60-66.)

Then, again, what a breach did Christ make between Saul of Tarsus and the allies at Damascus, to whom the former had letters from the

authorities in Jerusalem. Instead of acting along with the Jews of Damascus, in order to the suppression of the faith of Jesus, Saul stood forth a bold champion of the doctrine of the cross, and a formidable opponent of the party he had intended to assist and to lead. And the Jews were not slow to resent the conduct of their friend. We are told that they took counsel to kill him, watching the gates day and night. (Acts ix. 19-24.)

3d, Christ makes strife *in the general community*. There are many examples of this. Paul's preaching at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 42-50) was followed by great disturbance—one portion of the citizens joyfully receiving the gospel, and another "contradicting and blaspheming." In a similar way a great rupture between the Jews and the Greeks was produced at Corinth. The former, exasperated by the Apostle's success, dragged him to Gallio's bar; and the latter, excited by the proceedings of the Jews, laid hands on Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat. (Acts xviii. 12-17.) At Ephesus, the spread of the gospel issued in the tumult of Demetrius the silversmith. The whole city was filled with confusion. An immense mob was formed. Some cried one thing, and some another, and the greater part knew not wherefore they were met. When at length a Jew tried to address the heathen multitude, their passion rose to such a height, that for two long hours they shouted together, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." (Acts xix. 23-34.) The appearance of Christ's apostle in the Temple threw Jerusalem into an uproar. All the city was moved on the occasion, and the Roman garrison quelled the riot with difficulty. (Acts xxi. 27-36.) We follow Paul into the Court of the Sanhedrim, and what do we find? We find the Pharisees and Sadducees quarrelling about him, and the multitude is divided. "There arose a great cry; and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose and strove, saying, we find no evil in this man." And to that pass did the thing come between these and the Sadducees, that the chief captain, fearful lest Paul should be pulled in pieces among them, sent a party of soldiers to his rescue. (Acts xxiii. 1-10.)

4. Christ sends division *into the visible Church*. Take the following practical illustrations of the fact.

1st, There is the controversy which arose at the time of the feast of tabernacles, as recorded, John vii. 40-53. The professors of the Jewish religion were then the visible Church, and the feast of tabernacles was one of its principal ordinances. It appears that Jesus drew much attention, and powerfully impressed many of the worshippers. A great argument was raised. Some declared, "Of a truth this is the Prophet." And some said plainly, "This is the Christ." On the other hand, it

was maintained that that could not be. "Shall Christ," the objectors said, "come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was?" "So there was a division among the people because of him." The division was not restricted to the people. It reached the rulers also. The voice of Nicodemus was heard in the council, protesting that the claim of Jesus should be fairly examined before they presumed to reject it.

2*d*, We have the history of the labours of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium. (Acts xiv. 1-7.) There, as everywhere else, they first addressed themselves to the Jews. With the Jews was the visible Church, until the gospel came. The Jews, in each place, were the Church of God in that place, until they had the offer of the gospel, and rejected it. Paul and his colleague went therefore, on their arrival, to the synagogue of Iconium, because the meetings of the Church were held in it. They did not preach long before there was a schism. "They so spake," it is said, "that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed." But all did not believe. There were "unbelieving Jews," who "stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." The servants of Christ were unmoved by the opposition. They persevered more and more. "Long time abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord." What was the consequence? The consequence was, that "the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles." At length the apostles were expelled from the place. The enemies of the truth proceeded to extremities against them. "An assault was made both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with the rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them; they were ware of it," and withdrew to other regions, "and there they preached the gospel."

3*d*, It is stated (Acts xvii. 1-8) that Paul and Silas came to Thessalonica, "where was a synagogue of the Jews"—where, in other words, was a branch of the visible Church. What did they do? "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." Two things are to be noticed in the subsequent narrative.

*First*, The fact that there was a great disturbance. "The Jews that believed not," "took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar." "And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city."

*Secondly*, The time when the disturbance took place. For three Sabbath-days Paul preached in the synagogue without molestation. Then his doctrine began to tell, and the fruit of the word appeared. Some

of the Jews believed, and "consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." After this occurred, the enmity was awakened. The synagogue was now split in two. Now the unbelieving Jews were "moved with envy." When converts were made, a fierce faction arose, thirsting for the blood of the preachers. The interference of the civil power was demanded, and "Jason and certain brethren," the more conspicuous of the adherents of Paul, were charged before the magistrates with countenancing men who were sowers of sedition, and traitors to the laws! Paul might have preached long enough, had his preaching caused no impression, and gained no proselytes to Christ. For anything we know to the contrary, he might have continued, from Sabbath to Sabbath indefinitely, to argue about Jesus of Nazareth, while it seemed a mere fancy of his own, and all the notice the Jews would have taken of him might have been, What does this babbler say? Or, perhaps, they would have even applauded his eloquence, and been interested with his zeal; but when he began to do good to his hearers, and the power of the crucified Saviour's love, which was his theme, began to be felt, the serpent took the alarm, and the seed of the serpent put forth the venom it derived from its parentage. There was no more toleration for him then. He was viewed as a dangerous innovator from that instant. He was a troubler of Israel, whose mouth must be shut.

4th, Next, let us attend the great apostle to Corinth, and consider his eventful sojourn there. The record is in Acts xviii. 1, 4-8, "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth." "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."

What was it that fell out at Corinth on this occasion? There was a disruption of the Church. Paul, as his manner ever was, began by addressing himself to those to whom belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." A disruption ensued, as we have said. But, that we may better understand and profit by the history, let several particulars be noticed.

*First*, See what preceded the disruption. "He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." There was a period of zealous and faithful ministrations. A work of seed-sowing was diligently prosecuted. The professed worshippers of God were closely dealt with, and appeals were made to their understandings, their consciences, and their hearts. All classes who frequented the synagogue, both native Jews and Grecian proselytes, were addressed. And this continued for some length of time.

*Secondly*, Mark how the crisis was brought on. "When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ." It is evident there was some change in the Apostle's proceedings; and that this change was connected with the arrival of his companions. We learn from previous chapters that the word had taken strong hold in the chief cities of Macedonia; and that, on the departure of Paul, Silas and Timothy had remained there to encourage the numerous disciples, and to watch over the progress of the gospel. The arrival at Corinth of these faithful allies, bringing doubtless a cheering report from the field of their labours, stirred the soul of the Apostle, and gave a new impulse to his zeal. He felt now that the time was come for more fully declaring the truth than he had hitherto deemed it expedient to do, and for announcing all the claims and prerogatives of Mary's crucified son. Now he "testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ." He had not done this before. It is probable that he had contented himself with combating on the ground of Old Testament Scripture, the prevailing Jewish prejudices and errors respecting the work and reign of the promised Messiah. Discoursing of *what* the Messiah was to be, and *what* he was appointed to do, he had reserved the mighty question, *who* the Messiah was, or whether he had yet appeared. But he entered on that question now. The Messiah, said he, is come. The promise made unto the fathers has received its fulfilment. Jesus of Nazareth is our long-expected Christ. I must not, I cannot, continue to keep back the great tidings. Unto you has been born in the city of David—for you has been crucified on the hill of Calvary—and for you has been raised from the dead, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. Believe in Jesus of Nazareth, O ye Jews! He is your Prophet, your Priest, your King—He is the Shepherd of Israel—He is the heir of David's throne—the government is already on his shoulders. Thus spake the Apostle. He told them of Jesus—the crucified—the risen—the exalted—the glorified. He claimed their homage for Jesus as the Christ, their anointed king. They could not endure his doctrine. While he reasoned of an abstract Messiah, they had listened. Had he announced a carnal Messiah, an earthly monarch of the Church



of God, they would have hailed him as the messenger of joyful news ; but they hated the doctrine of a spiritual prince already enthroned, and reigning over a kingdom not of this world. Every unrenewed feeling recoiled from the thought ; many of his auditors "opposed themselves and blasphemed;" and the crisis was no longer delayed.

*Thirdly*, Observe, next, the disruption itself. The Apostle found now that he must withdraw from the synagogue. His departure was solemn. "When they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads : I am clean ; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." With these words, Paul took his farewell ; and, leaving his adversaries in the undisturbed possession of the synagogue, retired to the house of one Justus hard by, and continued his ministry there. Paul might have urged that, as the synagogue was a place set apart for the service of the Lord God of Israel, and for the teaching of the true doctrine concerning the Messiah, he and his friends had a right to the possession of it ; and that to exclude the servants of Jesus of Nazareth was to exclude the very parties to whom the use of it justly belonged. He might have represented that he, a Jew, had done nothing to forfeit the privilege that pertained to him as a Jew—that he was an authorized and orthodox expounder of the religion of the Jews—that he was an apostle of the Messiah of the Jews, and was therefore entitled, in the name of his Master, to occupy the synagogue of the Jews, and to have the benefit of the temporalities of the Church of the Jews. The plea would have been good ; and Paul suffered wrong when he was obliged to leave the synagogue. The true Church of God at Corinth—that Church for which the synagogue had professedly been built—existed now in the persons of Paul and those who embraced his doctrine, and was virtually expelled from the synagogue along with them. But it was not for man, under the circumstances of the time, to vindicate the rights of which the Church of God was deprived. The Apostle wisely submitted in quietness, and left the vindication of them to God.

*Fourthly*, Notice, in fine, the subsequent success. Having told that Paul withdrew to the house of Justus, the history goes on to say, that "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed with all his house : and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized." We know not whether Crispus accompanied Paul at the time of his secession ; but, if he did not, he speedily followed him, moved more, it may be, by the firmness and decision which he saw on that occasion, than by anything he had previously heard from Paul's lips. The Corinthians, too, were profoundly impressed ; the house of Justus was crowded with listeners ; multitudes were awakened, and converted, and added, by baptism, to the Church. Was the disruption, then, an evil ? Yes, an

evil, no doubt it was, to the party that rejected the gospel, whatever that party may have thought. It was the end of their merciful visitation. But it was not an evil, so far as the cause of Christ and the welfare of the Church were concerned. The friends of the Saviour had no reason to deplore it. Great advancement to the truth came in its train; and many, who sometime had been far off, were brought nigh, and, from being strangers and foreigners, became fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God.

*5th,* Let us attend the Apostle of the Gentiles once more, and consider what befell during his ministry at Ephesus:—"And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus." "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." "And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." (Acts xix. 1, 8-12, 18-20.) Here we have a disruption just as at Corinth.

*First,* There was a period of faithful preaching. Whether Paul pursued exactly the course he had taken at Corinth, we are not told, but probably his plan of developing the truth was much the same. For the space of three months he continued in the synagogue. During all that time "he spake boldly." He did not fail to attack prevailing errors, and to declare the whole counsel of God. His theme, it is said, consisted in "the things concerning the kingdom of God;" that is to say, he shewed that God's Church *was* a kingdom, and that, as such, it had laws and a government of its own. He shewed that it was a spiritual kingdom, which ought not to be confounded with the kingdoms of the world. As a kingdom behoved to have a king, he insisted that the Church had a king, and that that king was Jesus, who had been crucified. And he called upon the worshippers of the synagogue, the members of God's Church, both Jews and proselytes, to bow the knee to Jesus, and acknowledge him as their Saviour, their Head, and their Lord.

*Secondly*, The doctrine of the Apostle at length became intolerable. For three months he was borne with; and, at first, perhaps in some degree patiently. When he began, the novelty of what he taught was in his favour; and his earnestness and eloquence may, for a time, have given him an ascendancy that repressed opposition. But gradually, as the bearings of his system were seen, and the nature and tendency of his doctrine about the kingdom of God were more and more understood, discontent arose, murmurs were heard, and blasphemies broke forth. "Divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude." It is plainly meant that the misrepresentations to which the enemies of the truth resorted, were successful in perverting the great body of the people; and we may conclude that Paul, who, at the outset, had possibly been popular, and had certainly been listened to with attention and a measure of respect, was now, at the close of three months, assailed by clamour and execrations on every side.

*Thirdly*, A secession immediately followed. When things reached the crisis which has been described, "Paul departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." He found that he could go on in the synagogue no longer. The possibility of external communion between the two parties, into which the worshippers were divided, was at an end. The anti-evangelical faction had become too violent and hostile to admit of any farther ecclesiastical intercourse with them. The Apostle, therefore, separated the disciples, and the friends of the gospel forsook the synagogue, and found an asylum for their assemblies in the school of one Tyrannus. Did Paul commit the sin of schism, when he set up his separate meeting? Certain it is, there was no lack of plausibilities to give colour to such a charge. It might have been said, with some appearance of truth, that the ancient communion was unchanged. The good old standards, Moses and the prophets, had not been meddled with. They were still, as they had ever been, read in the synagogue, and their authority was not called in question. No new formularies had been brought in to supersede them, or to take rank along with them in regulating the faith or practice of God's professing people. The only innovator was Paul. The Apostle, moreover, was in a minority. He turned his back upon the bulk of the worshippers, when he left the synagogue. Granting, therefore, that Paul had had the best of the argument, and that the Jews were decidedly wrong in resisting his views, did it follow that he was justified in organising a separate fellowship, and in carrying off those who agreed with him to the school of Tyrannus? Should he not rather have acted on the rule, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another?" Rather than give external form and perpetuity to division among the

worshippers of the Lord God of Israel, ought he not to have transferred his labours to some other field, not doubting but the seed that he had sown in the synagogue of Corinth would by and bye bear fruit, and the body, which now rejected him, would, in due time, by the leading of Moses and the Prophets, come round? Who could tell what influence his converts might have had in leavening the mass of the people, if they had not been drawn out as a body by themselves, and no wall of separation had been reared? Such things might have been said; and on grounds such as these, the cry of schism might have been raised against Paul. But the Apostle was not a schismatic, whatever his opponents might imagine or pretend. The standard of Old Testament Scripture was renounced in a great and vital point by the occupants of the synagogue, although it was nominally retained. Paul and his adhering minority did not separate from the church; but went forth the faithful, the ancient, and the only true Church of God, in the place. And had it been possible, in the circumstances of the particular case, that any whom they left behind were genuine believers in Jesus of Nazareth, these were not in reality against them, and did not belong to another Church, but, while outwardly divided and estranged, were actually of the community which was visible in the worshippers of the school of Tyrannus.

*Fourthly,* The new position of the Church was signalled by the remarkable progress of the gospel. For the space of two years Paul pursued his labours, after the event which has been considered occurred. During all that time he was little molested. By the disruption in the synagogue he had got clear of hindrances which must have greatly restricted his usefulness, and the word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. "All they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Peculiar tokens of Divine favour attended him. "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." He was honoured by his Master to a degree that he had never been before. And as the word grew mightily, so it prevailed. "Many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also, which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burnt them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." Surely in all this there was the sanction of God to the step which had been taken. True it is that God often, we may say always, brings good out of evil. But is it in such a way as to disguise the character of evil, and to make that which is really evil seem good? No, never. How vast, for instance, the good which He brings out of the unparalleled evil done by those who crucified his Son! But is the manner in which that good is elicited fitted in the least to lesson our abhorrence of the conduct of Pilate, and the chief priests and scribes? Verily

no. And had he disapproved of the movement of Paul in departing from the synagogue—had he viewed it as a step that was sinful in itself—we may be confident that he would not have graced it, as he did, with those wonders of his power, nor have crowned the man, on whom the responsibility lay, with that train of spiritual successes and blessings with which the Apostle was immediately rewarded.

III. Thus have we examined the successive schisms and feuds that sacred history shews to have arisen from the mission of our Lord. It is now time that we shortly advert to the *proper* causes to which these are to be traced. We have just said that Paul was not blame-worthy in regard to the divisions with which he had to do. Although, however, Paul did not do wrong, it by no means follows that wrong was not done. Strife and separation, especially in the worship and service of God, are not good, and blame must lie somewhere on account of them. Where, then, ought the blame to be laid? On this point there is a difference of opinion. Men are agreed that divisions, in themselves considered, are bad; but they are not agreed when the question comes to be whose fault it is that divisions exist. The world is accustomed, in a summary way, to cast the odium and the guilt entirely on the Church. Just as Ahab charged Elijah as the troubler of Israel, so the world arraigns the Church as the enemy of the concord of mankind. Even the Head of the Church has not escaped its accusations. "He stirreth up the people," they said of him; "We found this man perverting the nation." If thus they have spoken of the Master, we cannot wonder that the servants have had no better treatment. Of Paul and Silas it was said at Philippi, "These men do exceedingly trouble our city;" at Thessalonica the cry rose against them, "Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;" and, when the great Apostle was brought before Felix, his ditty ran, "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." And from that day to this, it has been the practice of many to brand the ministers and followers of Jesus as a faction of malcontents, who are habitually plotting against the peace of society, and seeking the subversion of its order and rules. What Haman said of old to Ahasuerus, on a memorable occasion, has been ever said of them, "There is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of the kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them."

But, my brethren, we prefer to take a somewhat different, and what we think a profounder—a more comprehensive and impartial—view, in

regard to this matter. We shall specify some causes which reason and Scripture point to, as lying at the foundation of all religious strife, and you will then be better able to judge in the distribution of the blame.

1st, There is *the existence of sin*. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" The first, the greatest, and the worst division of all, was produced by sin. It was sin that set God and man at variance. Next came division between man and his fellow, and this was the native effect of sin. The fatal schism between Cain and his brother, had sin at the root of it. Often there is sin on both sides. Thus, while the discord between Joseph and his brethren is mainly to be traced to the envy and malice of the latter, it is scarcely to be denied that the somewhat boastful relation of his dreams by the former, contributed to the rupture. In the case of the apostacy of the ten tribes, the unkindness and arrogance of Rehoboam must take its share of the blame along with the ambition and impiety of him who made Israel to sin. And always there is sin, on one side at least. Unbelief lay at the foundation of all the religious outbreaks that signalized the days of our Lord and his Apostles; and when, for the sake of Christ, a man's foes are they of his own household, and the son finds an enemy in his father, the sister in her brother, and the daughter in her mother, it is in consequence of the working of unbelief and hatred to the truth. Sin must create discord. There never will be peace in the world or in the Church until it is cast out.

2d, There is *Satan's rule in the world*. Satan, my brethren, has his dark kingdom amongst us. He reigns in all parts of the earth. And is he the friend of peace? Is peace the aim, or can it be the tendency of his government? More especially, is he favourable to the Church and its peace? Have we reason to expect that he will not take every opportunity, and ply all the means at his command to trouble it, and dissolve the union of its members? What else is the Church but a rival kingdom—a kingdom formed out of the materials of his kingdom, and set up for the very purpose of overthrowing his power? Surely Satan owes it a bitter grudge. Delighting in strife for its own sake, he delights in it also as an instrument of gratifying his malice against Christ, and of injuring the kingdom of Christ. We say, then, that the rule of the crafty god of this world is a cause, and a prime one, of the divisions that take place. No doubt he can insinuate, and propagate the belief, that the rule of Christ is the cause. And, as we know that he can quote Scripture when it seems to suit his ends, he may cite our Lord's words in the text to support his calumny. But we can answer him with

Scripture, and expose his sophistry. When he urges that it is written, "Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division;" we can answer by stating that it is also written, "The fruit of the Spirit is peace," and, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." To be the blameless occasion of strife is one thing, and to be the guilty cause of it is totally another. An occasion of strife is furnished by Christ's mission and rule, as the text indisputably intimates, and experience has abundantly shewn; but if God be not the author of confusion, and if Christ be the Prince of Peace, we must look for the responsibility, and lay the odium elsewhere.

3d, There is *the enmity of the wicked*. Is it not true that the Church of God everywhere is hated by the world? The Church is not the enemy of unrenewed men; their salvation is its prayer, its desire, the aim of its labours; but unrenewed men are, notwithstanding, the keen foes of the Church. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This hatred is not unfruitful. It has raised persecutions of every form; and its emissaries have gone forth, alas! too seldom in vain, to create envyings, strifes, heresies, schisms in the Church!

IV. It remains to say somewhat on the *relation* between the divisions which are found to be immediate consequences of Christ's mission on earth, and those ultimate results which have been promised. We have already adverted to the nature of the latter, and given specimens of the glowing language of Scripture concerning them. To the former they bear no resemblance—they are not only different—they are contrary. But God, who makes all things helpful to his designs, and the very mischiefs that flow from sin, the world, and the devil, and are meant to thwart Him, conducive to the execution of his plans, has established an important relation between the two.

1. Present divisions will enhance the enjoyment of the final unity and peace. The sweetness of pleasure is increased by the recollection of pain that preceded it. The memory of disease heightens the relish of health. The power of contrast, derived from past experience, adds to the distress of the wretched, and to the gladness of the happy. The torments of the rich man in hell are more acute, because once he was clothed in fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and the calm joy of Lazarus, reposing in Abraham's bosom, gets new zest from the circumstance that formerly he lay a despised beggar at the rich man's gate, and had none but the dogs to sympathise with him, by licking his sores. And O, when the time comes, as come it will, that divisions shall cease, and broils and bitterness be no more, and "Ephraim shall no

longer envy Judah, and Judah no longer vex Ephraim," how will a sense of the greatness of the change, and a remembrance of the distracted state gone by, add to the bliss of the perfected saints, and sweeten the cup of felicity which God's people shall drink together for ever !

.2. Divisions now prepare the way for the peace and unity that are to come. Divisions testify of the existence of evils of which they are the natural fruits. By their means, the attention of the Church is turned to these evils, and fixed down upon them. This is no small advantage. The removal of these evils is necessary to the welfare of the Church ; no pure, or safe, or lasting peace can be enjoyed while they remain. It is, therefore, a most important thing that the Church should be led to aim at their removal, and to direct the whole energy of her prayers and exertions against them. And believers will err much if they seek to heal divisions in any other way. Let them beware of patching up a premature peace. The outward form of unity is a mockery, and the maintenance of it a hypocrisy and a sin, when unity of heart and principle does not exist. It is only a pernicious semblance of peace that can be reached, so long as the roots of discord and schism are not pulled up. We must therefore restrain within bounds our thirstings after peace, till the obstacles between us and the only peace that is desirable are taken out of the path. As yet, it is far too soon to call out for peace. We must be patient and wait a while, if we would not have a peace that brings ruin along with it. No peace worth the having can come, until the interests of truth and purity are secured—until truth obtains its rights, and purity begins its reign. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." This is the necessary order ; let us not forget it. What we have now to do is, to maintain, exhibit, and spread the truth ; to preserve and enlarge the sphere, and to increase the amount, of its influence. Our present duty is to go to the deep sources of the divisions we bewail, and apply a remedy there. That which now we ought to desire and to pray for is a day of the Lord's great power, when every valley may be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low, and the highway of peace may be prepared. That which now we should pant for is the grace of the spirit to destroy all sin, and to knit the hearts of all men in the love of the truth. We should now long to see the little stone of Christ's kingdom dash in pieces the mighty image of Satan's dominion, and become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. Then there will be peace. The peace of God will reign then. "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and



in quiet resting places." There will be unity then. "The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be King to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. And David my servant shall be King over them, and they all shall have one Shepherd; they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them."

## SERMON XXVI.

CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST, BEARING THE INIQUITY OF OUR HOLY THINGS.

BY THE REV. HORATIUS BONAR, KELSO.

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, *like* the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre shall it be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead that they may be accepted before the Lord."—EXODUS xxviii. 36-38.

THE sacrifices under the law were of various kinds. They were not merely numerous and often repeated, but they were manifold in their nature and design. True, there was but one altar—one High Priest—one tabernacle—all foreshadowing the one Saviour; but there were manifold offerings, differing the one from the other, to set forth the "manifold grace of God," and the manifold perfections of Him in whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." Thus these sacrifices, by means of their diversity, were all the more exactly fitted to prefigure Him who is the fountain opened for all sin and for all uncleanness; and the High Priest, in the continual offering up of these, as well as in the performance of the various kindred offices pertaining to the tabernacle, did the more fully exhibit him in all his completeness as the servant of the varied wants of sinners.

The variety of these sacrifices was not an arbitrary and capricious appointment. It was not for mere pomp and show. It was not the idle filling up of an unmeaning ritual for the sake of novelty and effect. God had a special purpose to serve in so ordaining it. It was by this means that he descended to particulars in teaching Israel his name as the Lord God, "merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Before this he had proclaimed, by the general ordinance of sacrifice, that there was forgiveness with him through the blood-shedding of a substitute; but now he enters into more minute detail, in order to shew that there is suitable and special provision made for every kind of sin, and every class of sinners. Thus, no guilty conscience could be left with the impression that there was no offering suited to its case; and every Israelite was made to feel, that while the searching eye of God rested upon every sin with which he was chargeable, there was at the same time the most ample provision made for its being put away. A general

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showing forth of pardon by the institution even of one offering, would doubtless have relieved the troubled soul; and though it might not dissipate every fear, would yet convey to it a precious message of peace by such a manifestation of the forgiving love of God. But this minute specification of diverse sacrifices for diverse sins was fitted to set the conscience still more at liberty, and to enable an Israelite to come to God as one who knew that his iniquity was covered. That distance from God, and distrust of his mercy, which the idea of imperfect or uncertain forgiveness necessarily produces, was thus removed, and the lingering suspicions of the sinner's doubting heart fully met and dispelled. No one could imagine that his condition had been overlooked by God, or that his case was so peculiar as to be without a remedy. No weary, burdened sinner could say that the declaration of pardon was too vague and general to yield sure and abiding comfort. Oh, how has that God who knows not merely our sins but our suspicions and sorrows, herein manifested the greatness of his compassion towards us, and shewn that his desire is not merely to forgive us, but to make us know that we are forgiven—to give us perfect peace by removing from us all our iniquities as far as the east is from the west!

But, then, in the very act of offering these sacrifices there was sin. When the sinner brought the lamb or the goat to the altar, there was sin committed in the very act of bringing it. There was, for instance, the imperfect conviction of the sin confessed—the want of a deep sense of the holiness of that God against whom the transgression had been committed, and of the purity of that law which had been broken. There was the coldness, the irreverence, the deadness, the wandering, the many impure motives that mingled with the act of service. There was the defective realization of Divine things—the want of due solemnity—perhaps, too, the grudging of the animal offered up. These, and many similar shortcomings and sins in the way of bringing the sacrifice, could not fail to make the Israelite feel that iniquity was spread over all his holy things, and must be removed before they could be accepted. The thought, too, that God saw in him far deeper sin than he himself understood or imagined, must have led him to ask, how the sin of his holy things was to be forgiven? If, indeed, when he came to the altar of God he could have come with a perfect heart, without a wandering thought or impure desire, then he might be content with the sacrifice itself which he presented. But when he was conscious that in every part of his holy service he was sinning still, the anxious inquiry could not but be prompted, “How are the sins of my holy things to be put away?”

How, then, was such a case to be met? How was this to be remedied? The offering of another sacrifice would not accomplish this, for is that

also there would be sin, so that *another* offering would be required again. No repetition of sacrifices, however numerous and costly, could provide for this; for still in the offering of each sacrifice there would be sin committed by the worshipper. Nor could this case be remedied by simply forgiving the sins connected with the sacrifice, without any special mention of the way in which this forgiveness was to come; for this would countenance the vain idea that there were some sins which did not require the intervention either of priest or sacrifice for their remission; whereas every part of that ritual was so constructed as to teach them that every sin needed special provision for its taking away, and that for every sin there was such special provision made. Besides, such a way of pardon would seem to imply, that if a man but brought the appointed offering, it did not matter how imperfectly he presented it. Nor would it have done merely to ordain that the high priest should bear the iniquity of the holy things of Israel. This would give the idea that he did not need that forgiveness himself—that there was something about him which exempted him from the guilt of his fellow Israelites, and that he, though a sinner like other men, could yet his own self “bear iniquity.”

None of these ways was at all adequate to the end designed. None of them would have given a true idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. None of them would have suitably set forth the provision which God has made for its complete removal. None of them would have fully satisfied the conscience of the worshipper, or given him the assurance that his imperfect services were accepted, and all the defects cleaving to them purged away. Besides, if there were no special and solemn provision made for this case, it would imply that the sins of their holy things were less heinous than others; whereas it was God's manifest intention to declare, in the most effectual and impressive way, that these iniquities were even more hateful than the transgression itself for which the sacrifice was brought to the altar.

God provided another and a more excellent way. He did not institute a new sacrifice—he did not merely announce a pardon for such transgressions, nor did he simply say the high priest shall bear these iniquities. A far more perfect method was adopted—not a sacrifice, but a person—not merely a person, but one in peculiar circumstances. The high priest was appointed to bear them, but then it was in a robe of a most peculiar kind. It was not his usual raiment, nor was it his raiment on the day of atonement. It was a dress which seemed to array him with more than mortal holiness—a dress which shadowed forth the divine perfection of the sin-bearer—a dress which at once proclaimed the need for pardon, and gave the assurance that it was all provided for and secured.

Let us attend briefly to the description given us in the text of the high priest's peculiar vesture, or rather *head-dress*, for the other parts of his raiment remained as before: only upon his head new adornings were to be placed, not only to add new beauty to a dress already singular for its comeliness and splendour, but especially to shew forth the extent of personal holiness which a holy God required in him who was not merely to bear Israel's common sins, but to "bear the iniquity of their holy things."

The first thing that strikes us here is, that it is the *head* of the high priest that is thus adorned, the most honourable member of the body, the seat of the indwelling soul. Then, again, it is the *forehead* that is selected, which is the comeliness and glory of the head—the place on which the eye of the observer rests, and on which the eye of God would rest when meeting with the priest or the worshipper. On the forehead of the high priest, on the "forefront of his mitre," was the ornament to be fastened. It consisted of a plate of pure gold, the purest and costliest of metals, to signify the purity that God demanded. On it there was to be engraved, like the engravings of a signet, distinct and deep, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD,"—still farther foreshadowing the awful holiness of God, and the no less awful holiness which he required in the sin-bearer. Then this plate of gold was to be fastened to a "blue lace," denoting holiness both by its texture and its colour—its texture, the finest that can be woven by art and man's device—its colour, the bright stainless azure of God's own firmament. All this, placed upon Aaron's forehead, in addition to his other priestly robes of service, was to fit him for being Israel's sin-bearer in what pertained to "the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts. And then it is added, "It shall be ALWAYS upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

Forming thus the most prominent part of his dress, and placed upon his forehead, it would be that on which the eye of God might be said first to rest, whether at the brazen altar or the altar of incense, or the mercy seat, in all parts of his holy service. When standing before God, it was this peculiar adorning that presented itself, with its inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." Thus, then, there was proclaimed to Israel a free forgiveness for the iniquities of their holy things. This forgiveness was not to depend upon their own imperfect actings or feelings. It was not to be bestowed on the condition of their presenting their offerings in a perfect way. It was forgiveness not through their own perfection, but through the perfection of another—not through their own holiness, but the holiness of another. It was forgiveness through one whom God had selected and prepared in a most peculiar way—a way which pro-

claimed his own awful holiness, as much as his infinite grace. It was forgiveness through the *holiness* of another, as if God would teach them that while he required holiness in him who was to bear any sin, yet especial holiness was required when bearing the sins of our holy things. And then there was not merely the bare forgiveness, but there was the *acceptance* thus provided, both for themselves and their services, before the Lord.

All this was to Israel the shadow of "good things to come." The law, indeed, made nothing perfect, but it was the bringing in of the better hope, by which we draw nigh to God. (Heb. vii. 19.) This better hope has now been brought in. What was thus foreshadowed afar off by Aaron, as Israel's high priest, has been fulfilled to us in Jesus of Nazareth, God's own anointed Priest. We have a High Priest, as well as Israel, one to bear the iniquity of our holy things. We have a temple not made with hands. We have an altar, but not of man's building. We have a sacrifice, but not of bulls and of goats,—a sacrifice of richer blood, and mightier efficacy, than any that was ever laid on Israel's altars. We have a High Priest, too, ministering in our name, and in our behalf, before God,—a High Priest who has passed into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us—a High Priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. This High Priest, whose holiness is so infinite, whose ministry is so prevailing, bears the iniquity of our holy things. He does for us what Aaron did for Israel. But he does it in substance, not in figure; he does it so effectually that "the worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins." (Heb. x. 2.) He does it also by his own holiness, not by a figurative or typical holiness, but by that which is really and truly His own, for He is the infinitely Holy one. And it is as God's own Holy High Priest, that he bears the iniquity of our holy things. It is just because He is so holy, that He is so peculiarly fitted to bear iniquities like these.

God is thus teaching how much the sins of those duties and services, which we call *holy*, need forgiveness. We are apt to think, that there is such a difference between our open sins and our religious exercises, that any defilement attaching to the latter must be so inconsiderable in itself, and so outweighed by the sacredness of the act performed, that no particular account need to be taken of these sins. God's estimate is very different indeed. His eye sees the sins of our religious services in another light, as being no less heinous than other iniquities, and needing special forgiveness no less than they. Not merely our open transgressions—our scarlet and crimson sins—need pardon, but our holy services, our good words and deeds, our prayers, our praises, our worship, our breaking of bread at the table of the Lord. In every one of these there

is such an amount of sin cleaving to, and mingled with, every act, and feeling, and thought, and word, as to render them in themselves so miserably defective and defiled, as to be utterly unacceptable in the sight of the Holy One. When seeking God, we need to have our way of seeking and our act of seeking forgiven. When praying for pardon, we need to have that prayer itself forgiven. Each petition bears witness against us. There is such imperfection, such coldness, such formality, such deadness, such wandering, such half-heartedness, such a want of every thing that constitutes prayer, that, were there not forgiveness for the sins of our holy things, we might as well cease to pray. When coming to Christ, we need forgiveness for our act of coming, for the impure motives which lead us to come, as well as for the defective way in which we come. All this is provided for. There is forgiveness not merely for the sins we bring to Christ, but for our way of bringing them. This is a point where many stumble. They say, that they know there is full pardon for them in Christ, and full provision to be found in him for every want, but their difficulty is about *the coming* to him. They think that the *act* of coming should be as holy as possible, and that, unless it be so, their acceptance is a very doubtful thing. They think that, if they could only come in a right way, and from right motives, there would be no danger of their success; but, with so much that is defective in their way of coming, they doubt whether they can venture to do more than merely hope the best. Now, this is just to say, that their acceptance depends, in part, at least, upon themselves—upon their coming aright. Whereas the gospel takes for granted that there is nothing right about them, either about themselves or their way of coming, but that every thing about them, and done by them, needs forgiveness. Such forgiveness is provided, and it is here prefigured by the high priest bearing the iniquity of our holy things. Thus, there is no place left for any such misgivings. Where is there room for a single doubt to thrust itself? What point is there at which God does not meet every possible doubt that can arise? There is no room for saying, my sins are too great to be forgiven. Neither is there any room for saying, my way of coming to Christ is so defective, my way of seeking pardon is so sinful, that I am doubtful whether I shall be accepted. The full provision made for us in Christ is such as to meet us at all these points, and exclude every shadow of a doubt, from whatever quarter it may arise.

From all this, we gather the following most precious truths,—truths not only precious to the believer who has already found acceptance in the Beloved, but to the anxious soul when just beginning to ask the way of salvation and peace :—

1. *We learn how complete is the provision made by God for a sinner's acceptance.* This provision is entirely in him who is our great High Priest. It is not in ourselves at all, but in him alone. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is the Father's infinite treasure-house of all blessing, secured for, and set open to, sinners. Nothing that a guilty soul can require, is wanting in him. Out of him, there is nothing; in him, there is everything. "He, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

In our text, however, the allusion is not to his fulness in general, but to his priesthood alone, as making provision for a sinner's pardon and acceptance, and this in reference to the sins of our holy things—the sins committed in our more direct transactions with God. For every sin, and for every kind of sin, there is a provision in him on whom our sins were laid. For all these there is a special way of pardon ordained by God, and certain sins are minutely specified, in order to show us that no case has been overlooked or left without a special remedy. And as "the iniquities of our holy things," the sins committed in our direct transactions with God, either in his worship or when dealing with him regarding our souls, would form an insuperable barrier to our obtaining the forgiveness of our other sins, and would utterly mar our fellowship with a holy God, so these are singled out by name, both on account of their peculiar heinousness, and also because of the place which they thus occupy, and the obstruction which they would otherwise form in the way of our intercourse with God.

There is forgiveness, then, for the iniquities of our holy things: forgiveness not only for our omissions of duty, but for our duties themselves; forgiveness, not only for our estrangement from God, but for our sins in returning to him; forgiveness, not only for our prayerlessness, but for our prayers; forgiveness, not only for our long rejection of Christ, but for our sins in coming to him; forgiveness, not only for our unbelief, but for our faith; forgiveness, not only for our past enmity, but for our present cold-hearted love; forgiveness, not only for the sins we bring to Christ, but for our way of bringing them; forgiveness, not only for the sins we carried to the altar of burnt-offering, and laid upon the bleeding sacrifice, but for our imperfect way of taking them, the impure motives that defiled our service, and also for the sins mingling with our worship when standing within the veil in that sanctuary, where the majesty of the Holy One has made its abode.

Is not this, then, truly blessed? To have such complete provision made for our pardon and acceptance, as well as for the acceptance of our holy things! To have such an High Priest over the house of God—that house into which we, in believing, entered, and from which we shall go



out no more ! We are "complete in Him." In ourselves most incomplete, in our duties most incomplete, in our worship most incomplete, but yet in *Him* COMPLETE ! "Perfect through the comeliness which he hath put upon us !" How often have we said to ourselves, were my prayers but more earnest and sincere, less cold and wandering, I could believe their acceptance, but this insensibility and lifelessness, these wandering thoughts and wayward desires, fill me with despair as to the possibility of my being heard at all. Is there not, however, in this state of feeling, a desire to be complete in *yourselves*, instead of being complete in *him*—to "be found" in yourselves, instead of being "found in him ?" Are you not seeking to be accepted because of your fervency and feeling, instead of being accepted in the High Priest alone ? Are you not forgetting the infinite perfection that God sees in him—because of which he sees no imperfection in you, and trying to find grace in his sight, by binding round your own forehead some fancied badge of personal holiness or feeling, instead of reminding Him of the High Priest of our profession, on whose brow rests the mitre with its golden plate, and its ineffaceable engraving, "Holiness to the Lord."

Amid the multitude of our thoughts within us, is there not consolation unspeakable in remembering that God has made most ample provision for the putting away of these very sins, over which we so bitterly and so justly mourn ? So that, instead of desponding, might we not, even when most conscious of these shortcomings, thus calmly plead, "not my impure prayer, but the pure prayer of Jesus ; not me but my High Priest ; not my intercessions but his ; not my perfection but his ; not my holiness but his ; look not on me but on him on whom I am looking ; behold, O God, my shield, look upon the face of thine anointed."

II. *Let us learn how perpetual and unchangeable this provision is.* It is written here, concerning the High Priest on earth, "It shall be ALWAYS upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." In this we have a vivid type of him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ;" who hath "an unchangeable priesthood ;" who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." He who bears the iniquity of our holy things, is one who changes not ; who is ever the same Holy High Priest, and ever glorious in the Father's eyes. We vary, but he varies not. Our feelings change, his alter not. Our soul fluctuates, ever-rising and falling, ever-ebbing and flowing, but he remaineth stedfast and true. We grow cold and faithless, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself. His is a priesthood which endureth for ever, which never loses aught of its efficacy and value. Deriving its virtue and power from the infinitely glorious *person* of the Priest himself, and not

in any degree depending upon us, our doings or our feelings, it remains ever sure, and without the shadow of a change. It is a priesthood which has already carried thousands and tens of thousands of God's Israel within the veil, and given them boldness when standing there in the immediate presence of Jehovah, and it is able to do this for tens of thousands more. It is a priesthood which has borne the iniquity of the holy things of God's worshipping ones in all time past, even from the beginning, and it will abide as infinite in its efficacy, until the High Priest appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. What abundant consolation is this! what liberty of conscience, what tranquil confidence of spirit ought this at all times to produce when drawing near to God for worship or communion within the veil!

It is written of our High Priest, "Christ is not entered into the Holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." This is our confidence. It is the knowledge of this that relieves our fears, and makes us feel at home with God. If Christ, then, be still in heaven, if he be still appearing there for us, then what more do we stand in need of to speak peace to our souls? "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." To know what he is, to know what he is doing, to know that he is ever the same, to know that I am as welcome to him as ever any sinner that came to him—this surely is peace, which no storm without, and no corruption within, can break or ruffle! "Always upon his forehead!" It was this which spoke continual peace to Israel. It was this which assured them of acceptance. When their peace was broken, or their acceptance clouded, they would think of the high priest's mitre, and that would be enough to re-assure and comfort them. They knew that its gold could not rust or grow dim—that its inscription could not be erased—and this was their consolation. They needed no more. So it is with us. We know that our High Priest remaineth the same for ever. He cannot change. It is the thought of this that preserves our peace unbroken in the midst of this changeful world, and these still more changeful hearts. He is our peace; for he has made peace through the blood of his cross. By that blood he has brought us into the sanctuary, and by the all-availing ministry of his unchangeable Priesthood, he keeps us there as in our proper, our paternal home, where all is reconciliation, and from which we shall go out no more!

III. *Learn how glorious and certain is this provision.* It depends upon the holiness of the High Priest. Not upon his grace, or mercy, or compassion, but upon his holiness. It is because there is such holiness in him to meet and satisfy the holiness of God that our forgiveness

is so secure, and the way of our obtaining it so glorious. What an ample pardon, what a sure acceptance, must that be which is secured to us by the *holiness* of our great High Priest! for his holiness cannot change, neither can it pass away. His mercy might be worn out by our sins, and he might forget to be gracious, but he cannot cease to be *holy*.

His holiness is infinitely perfect, and infinitely fragrant, in the Father's eyes. All the perfection of creature holiness, and all the perfection of divine holiness, are to be found in him. The Father's eye discerns no flaw in him. All is perfection in holiness; holiness not merely refulgent on his forehead, but pervading his whole person, and shining forth in every part. He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And this is our security. True, *we* see but little of that holiness, and can appreciate it but feebly. Let us remember, however, that it is not what we see, but what the Father sees, that is our security. It is the Father's estimate of his perfection, not ours, that forms the ground of our acceptance, and the acceptance of our holy things. It is the perfection that the Father sees in him, and in which he is well pleased, that is our foundation and resting-place. This perfection cannot change. Its glory abideth for ever. The Father's estimate of it, and delight in it, can never alter. The Son can never become less precious, less glorious, less holy, less perfect, in the Father's eyes. How certain, then, must our acceptance be! It is not the holiness of our gifts and services, that secure their acceptance; neither is it the holiness of the persons presenting them. It is Jesus, as our High Priest, presenting his infinitely holy person before God—appearing in the sanctuary above, with holiness engraven upon his priestly brow—that does for us what Aaron did for Israel of old. Unless God had disowned Aaron, and commanded the plate of gold to be torn from his forehead, Israel could not doubt their acceptance. So, unless the Father were to disown his Son, and take from him his Divine priesthood, we have no cause for doubting, no room for uncertainty.

Our imperfect services, our defective prayers, might well excite displeasure, and draw down upon us, not an answer of peace, but of wrath. But the Father looks away from us and our unholiness—he gazes on the spotless forehead of his own holy Son, and his anger is turned away. He sees no iniquity in our persons, and no imperfection in our prayers. No imperfection in us can make him less the Perfect One. No sin in us or our services can make it less true, that he is the altogether Holy One—holy in his person, holy in his priesthood, holy in his intercession for us before the Father's throne. Ever bearing the names of his purchased ones upon his jewelled breast, and ever bearing

upon his brow the symbol of perfect holiness, as their sin-bearer and substitute, he stands before God glorious all over in his garments of beauty, presenting the "holy things which his Israel hallow in all their holy gifts, that they may be accepted before the Lord."

IV. *Learn how accessible and free is this provision.*—It is set open to all. Its benefits are wide and unrestricted, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." In this respect the High Priest stands before us like the brazen serpent, that all may look and live. It is but looking on that forehead on which the Father's eye is fixed—turning our eye to that holiness in which God delights, and making that our plea—that brings us into the possession of all this full provision, and gives us the standing of accepted ones in his sight.

It is simply as sinners that we have to do with the sin-bearer, It is simply as lost ones that we have to do with the Saviour—it is simply as diseased ones that we have to do with the healer—and so it is here simply as sinners that we have to do with the High Priest who bears the iniquity of our holy things. It is not that which is good about us that gives us a claim upon him, but that which is evil. It is not that part of our prayers and services which is better than the rest, that warrants us to come to him, or makes us welcome, or entitles us to expect that what is evil in them may be forgiven. No. It is the evil that is in us, that is our only claim. It is the evil that is in our prayers that, on the one hand, makes him so necessary and so precious, and on the other, assures us of a gracious welcome; for, "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It is the evil and not the good about us, that makes the sinner and the Saviour so suitable to each other—making the sinner so welcome to the Saviour, and the Saviour so welcome to the sinner. Oh what an open door is this for each sinner to enter by! Oh what a sure refuge is this for each sinner to flee to! You who are still unsheltered, will you not flee and be saved? What riches of pardon are here treasured up in the person of our glorious High Priest! You who are still unpardoned, will you not come this day, this hour, and be forgiven? It is your evil, and not your good that fits you for coming. It is your unholiness, and not your holiness, that you are to carry with you. It is your darkness that makes you so welcome to him who is "the light of the world." It is your ignorance that fits you for him who has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. It is the consciousness of your imperfect prayers, no less than of your past prayerlessness, that should draw you without delay, and with willing footsteps, to him who is at the right hand of the Father, to bear the iniquity of your holy things. Put your case into his hands. Take

him for your sin-bearer and substitute. There is no holiness which the Father will accept but his. There is no name that you can plead but his. Take it, and go in with it to the Father, and you shall know not merely the peace of being forgiven, but the higher blessedness of being "accepted in the beloved."

Some one may say, in reference to these remarks, Oh, all this is most true, and to those who know themselves to be children of God, must be most blessed, but I do not yet know this, and therefore I have no right to rejoice. Well, but what is it that makes a child of God? Is it not the believing what the Father has testified of his well-beloved Son, his anointed Priest and Intercessor? You say, Oh, I believe all that, but I do not know whether I have any interest in Him. Now, herein you err, for God has identified these two things which you would make different; he has joined together what you would put asunder. You say, I believe, but I do not know whether I have an interest in Him. God says he that believeth has the interest; so that to speak of believing, and yet not having an interest, is to make void the plain Word of God, which says, "by Him all who believe are justified." (Acts xiii. 39.)

In conclusion, let me remark how fully all this provides, not only for the sinner's peace, but for his holiness. Having put on Christ, and being thus accepted in him upon believing, we find that the raiment with which we are clothed contains in its divine texture a healing virtue which goes forth from it for the renewing of our souls. The blood, with which we are sprinkled all over, not merely shields us from wrath, and hides our sins beneath its crimson covering, but sends forth a purifying influence throughout the whole man. "By his stripes we are healed."

But in addition to this, there are other considerations connected with the type before us fitted to weigh with the believing soul, and to serve as motives for stimulating us to seek conformity to the image of the Lord.

Let us consider the honour thus put upon us in having such an High Priest to minister for us, and such raiment to clothe and adorn us. Who is there in heaven or earth besides that has a representative at court like this? What angel is there that hath a robe like that wherewith the Father's hand has invested us on the day wherein he said, "bring forth the best robe and put it on him?" Who is there that hath such a standing before God—that is accepted as we are accepted—that is loved with such a love, or honoured with an honour equal to ours? Who is there that occupies such a position before God, and such a relationship to his eternal Son as that in which we *even now* rejoice? Who is there that hath a hope of glory such as we possess, and can look forward to an inheritance so rich, a crown so bright as ours—a crown which the darkly-

ominous events of the passing day show to be near at hand, it may be within this generation's reach ? " It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It is *his* robe that we shall wear, and is not his robe the fairest ? It is *his* crown that we shall put on, and is not his crown the brightest ? It is upon *his* throne that we shall sit down, and is not his throne the most exalted of all ? It is with the love wherewith the Father hath loved him, that he hath loved us,—and what love is there in the universe like that which the Father bears to the beloved Son ? It is as his Bride that we are to share his joy as well as his glory,—and what joy of affection can be compared to that with which he shall rejoice, in unhindered love, over the purchased partner of his throne ? For if in this the time of her betrothment there has been joy unspeakable and full of glory, Oh ! what will there be " in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart ! " If, then, these things be so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

And then, think of the dishonour which our unholiness casts upon him. The Apostle thus reasons with the Corinthians : " Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ; shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot. God forbid." So we may well reason ; shall we take the garments of our High Priest and make them a cloak of lasciviousness ? Shall we drag them through the mire of earth and defile them with the spots of the flesh ? Shall we trample them beneath our feet, or present them to the world for their mirth, as were the vessels of the sanctuary to Belshazzar in the night of his revelry ? Shall we undo the mitre from the High Priest's head ? Shall we tear off the plate of gold from his forehead, and erase the inscription graven so deeply there ? Shall we thus incur the awful guilt of bringing reproach and dishonour upon the only begotten of the Father ? Shall we not rather seek to honour him who has put such honour upon us, and who only asks this in return that we should honour him before a world that denies and disowns him ?

It may appear difficult to honour him aright in a world like this, where all without is sin and darkness, and all within so carnal and impure. And perhaps we shrink from the post assigned to us. We see no difficulty in glorifying him perfectly amid " the spirits of the just made perfect," when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, not one stain or scar of mortality left upon us ; when, with no enemy to assail us, and no corruption to trouble us, we shall perfectly honour him as we desire to do. And sometimes this bright prospect of coming perfection, coupled with de-

spondency and unbelief as to our present effort, impedes us in present duty, and prevents us from maintaining the conflict as we ought.

But let us remember that the peculiar honour which Christ receives from us arises from those very circumstances that awaken the despondency. We shall doubtless glorify him in heaven; but then we cannot glorify him there as we can do on earth. We shall, no doubt, have new opportunities, maturer faculties, and more ample scope for doing so above; but our present opportunities shall be all over then. We shall honour him before his friends, but we shall no longer be able to honour him before his enemies. We shall honour him before angels, but no longer before a world that lieth in wickedness. And this is the peculiar honour which he is seeking now at our hands, an honour which we shall not be able to render him hereafter. Hence it was just in his infirmities that the Apostle gloried, in order that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Hence it was that he sought to approve himself as a minister of God "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good." Oh! brethren, it will be nothing difficult to glorify Christ when all sin is gone for ever. It will be nothing marvellous that he should be honoured perfectly by us when all his enemies have been put to shame. But the marvellous thing is that he should be thus glorified on earth where he is despised and rejected of men. This is his peculiar glory. And this is what he expects at our hands. Oh! then, let us see that while, enjoying the benefit of his standing in the presence of God for us, and while living in the land of enemies, we render to him that honour which is so righteously his due, and which throughout all eternity we shall never be able to render him in heaven. He represents us well above, let us see that we as faithfully and truly represent him below. And instead of wearying too eagerly for the end of the warfare and the cessation of present weariness and sorrow, let us rejoice that he is thus affording us a season in which we may glorify him in a way that angels cannot do, in a way that the perfected spirits of the just cannot do, in a way which we ourselves shall be no longer able to do, when the wilderness and the warfare are at an end, and the everlasting rest begun.

## SERMON XXVII.

ON GOODNESS.

BY THE REV. PATRICK M'FARLAN, D.D. GREENOCK.

"He was a good man."—ACTS xi. 24.

THE opinions of men on the subject of moral goodness, that is, of men judging without reference to the Scriptures, the only true standard of moral excellence, are as various as the circles in which they move, and the persons with whom they associate. With some the standard of moral excellence is so low, that they regard a social good-humoured man as a good man, though notorious for his impiety and his vices, and his neglect of relative duties. Other men think that the whole of moral goodness is comprised in generosity and beneficence, if at least they be conjoined with uprightness and integrity; whilst a third class require that to these there should be added the external decencies of a religious profession.

In these different opinions, if such they may be called, it is obvious that there is no community of sentiment, no mutual agreement respecting the essential ingredients of real goodness. From the maxims and practical opinions of unconverted men, we can gather as little information on this important subject as from the systems of philosophers. They are expressive of their wishes rather than their deliberate convictions. Some of them approach more near to the truth than others; but none of them bear any resemblance to that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.

The Scriptures of truth give no uncertain sound; there is nothing indefinite or ambiguous in them, no collision between the statements and descriptions of one inspired writer and another. The goodness of which they speak is a goodness which they describe in all its parts, and all its principles, and all its manifestations, with the most perfect harmony and mutual agreement—a goodness which is the same in every age and under every dispensation, in every rank of life and every state of society. When they speak of Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas, and others, and say of them that they were "good" men, they use the epithet in a sense which they themselves have unfolded with the utmost clear-



ness and precision ; they speak of the goodness of these men of God according to that standard of truth and righteousness which is immutable as the throne of the Almighty, eternal as the character and attributes of Jehovah—of goodness manifested, not in one or a few particulars of life and conduct, but in all the dispositions, and graces, and conduct of the children of God. They speak of it, not as existing perfect and immaculately pure in this lower world, but as the goodness of the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, the sons of God and the followers of Christ, in contradistinction from those specious appearances which attract the notice and admiration of men, but are “abomination in the sight of God.” In common conversation we are accustomed to use the epithet “bad,” as applicable only to men of the most abandoned character, but we ought never to forget that before God the whole world is divided into two classes, the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked ; the former comprehending in it the children of God in all the degrees of moral excellence to which they have attained, and the latter, the children of the wicked one, from the mere moralist on the one hand, to the most profligate and abandoned criminal on the other. Goodness, in the Scripture sense of the word, is holiness ; it is the goodness which God enjoins, and of which he himself presents the most perfect pattern—the goodness which, begun on earth in the regeneration of the true Christian, is accepted and approved through Christ Jesus, and which, increasing with the increase of God, is perfected at last in his presence in heaven. What is this goodness ? To this question I intend to reply in the observations which follow.

I. In the *first* place, “a good man” is a converted man. There is no real goodness which has not its beginning in regeneration, and the conversion of the soul to God. This our Lord plainly declares, when, in answer to the question of the Jewish ruler, “Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life ?” he replied, “Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is God.” He declares in these words not only that all have sinned, and that there is none righteous, no not one ; but that, by nature, all are sinful and unholy, and that true goodness is the attribute or characteristic of God only. He does not deny that men may become good through the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit ; but addressing himself to a young man who imagined that, by doing some eminently good action, he might merit eternal life, he tells him that real goodness was not inherent in any man, but in God only. And such is the uniform testimony of sacred Scripture. “In me,” said the converted, the holy Paul, “that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” “God looked down from heaven upon the

children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back ; they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

These statements are not inconsistent with the fact, that there is a natural conscience in man, deterring him from evil, and prompting him to what is good, and that there are amiable feelings and emotions urging him to noble and generous actions ; nor can it be denied that, apart from the power of Divine grace, there is often a striking superiority of one man above another. Conscience retains a greater ascendancy over him, external circumstances are favourable to the development of his moral character, and he experiences the happiness of being virtuous. But the amiable qualities of unconverted men come far short of the goodness of the children of God ; nay, they serve to shew more strongly the wickedness of the human heart, which resists, with equal obstinacy, the dictates of natural conscience, and the warnings and admonitions of the Word of God. If there were no conscience in men, no sense of right and wrong, no law written in their hearts, men would be less guilty than they are in refusing to come to God, and to submit themselves to his authority. But there is a conscience in man, a power of moral perception, enabling him to resist to a certain extent the solicitations of sin, and prompting him to things laudable and praiseworthy ; whilst the sinfulness of the human heart prevails to detain him in a state of alienation from God and rebellion against Him.

True goodness, therefore, must be begun in regeneration. We must be born again—we must be "transformed, by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The eyes of our understanding must be enlightened, that we may discern the truth as it is in Jesus. The affections of our hearts must be drawn from lying vanities, and fixed supremely on God, and on the things which are above. We must be dead to sin, that we may live unto righteousness. Till then, sin must have dominion over us ; there can be no love of holiness, no obedience to God from the only principles and motives acceptable to Him. Natural conscience, the fear of future punishment, and the desire of applause, may prompt men, as wicked as Herod, to do many things good and profitable to men ; but the soul must be converted to God, there must be a new heart and a new spirit, a mind qualified to discern, and a heart inclined to approve the things that are excellent, ere any man can be called good in the sense in which the word is employed by the pen of inspiration.

In answer to the question, What is a good man ? I remark—

II. In the *second* place, that he is a man who believes in the

Lord Jesus Christ, and makes open and stedfast profession of his faith.

Superficial thinkers, and men ignorant of the gospel of Christ, will not recognise faith as an essential ingredient in real goodness. They seem to forget that faith, in the proper sense of the word, is not merely the holding of certain doctrines or opinions, but the cordial belief of facts which God has revealed to us for our consolation, and the humble reliance of a sinner on Christ as the author of eternal life to all who believe in him. Infidelity is obviously incompatible with true goodness; for it is the wilful deliberate rejection of the truth. But unbelief, in other words, the refusal of a sinner to accept of Christ as his Saviour, is equally incompatible with true goodness; for it is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the great salvation, and it is impossible to reject these precious blessings and to be guiltless.

When the Apostles of Christ went forth preaching the everlasting gospel, the chief subjects of their preaching were, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The necessity of the former is universally admitted; the Apostles preached the latter as no less indispensable, and, in obedience to the command of their Divine Master, explicitly declared, that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith, therefore, is an essential part of true goodness. How can it be otherwise? All have sinned, and, by sinning, have failed to attain to the glory of God. A Saviour has been provided, and, in the riches of the Divine beneficence, has been freely offered to men. The Son of God has descended from heaven to earth. He has fulfilled all righteousness, humbling himself to death, even the death of the Cross, for us and for our salvation, and is ascended to the right hand of God, mighty to save. Can there be any goodness in the heart which remains unmoved by love like this? Is there anything but the spirit of unholy rebellion in the breast of that man, who not only continues to sin against the other precepts and ordinances of the Almighty, but refuses to comply with the first duty of a perishing sinner—the duty of believing in the name of the Son of God? No, my friends, a man must be a believer, a humble, a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, if he would have the character, and privileges, and consolations, and hopes of a truly righteous man. A life of holy and devoted obedience must have its beginning in deep repentance and lively faith. Submission to the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of acceptance is one of the first acts of Christian obedience, one of the first and strongest evidences of our conversion to God. Under the in-wrought conviction of aggravated guilt and utter unworthiness, we must rest with simplicity of soul on the righteousness of the Saviour, and on the pro-

unised grace of the Holy Spirit. We must look habitually to the blood of sprinkling for the pardon of our sins ; and the life which we live in the flesh, we must live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved us and given himself for us.

And this faith we must openly and stedfastly profess. Believing with the heart unto righteousness, with the mouth we must make confession unto salvation. This is one of the evidences of the sincerity of our faith, the proof to ourselves, and the world around us, that our faith is a true and a saving faith, and not merely the cold speculative belief of the doctrine of Christ. If, indeed, we believe in Him, we must not be ashamed of him and of his words ; we must hold fast our profession in opposition to all the persecutions and temptations to which we may be exposed, glorying in nothing save in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.

III. In the *third* place, a good man is a man of piety and devotedness.

Piety, including in that expression reverence towards God, and love to him, is an essential part of real goodness, inasmuch that good men are characterised in Scripture as those who fear the Lord, who love God, who seek him, who wait upon him, whose fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The language of the saints, as recorded in the Word of God, is expressive of the most fervent piety, of the profoundest reverence for God, and holy joy in fellowship and communion with him.

When we reflect seriously upon the subject, it seems almost incredible that any intelligent man should presume to separate a pious and devout spirit from the other parts of a truly Christian character. Who can deny that it is one of the first duties of man to love God, and to seek to please him ? He is the all-perfect Jehovah, infinitely worthy of our love. He is the fountain of our being, and the source of all our happiness ; we are under the strongest obligations to love, and fear, and serve him. There is no alternative between the obligation to do so and Atheism. If we confess that he is, and that he is what he has revealed himself to be, we virtually declare that we are bound to love him supremely, and to serve him faithfully—bound to give him the chief place in our hearts, and to glorify him in our bodies and with our spirits, which are his. If it be our duty to love and honour our fellow-men, much more is it our duty to love and honour God. They are our brethren, members of the same family, servants of the same master. He is our Father in heaven, our guardian, and guide, and unwearied benefactor. The purest of our fellow-men are polluted and imperfect. God is immaculate and infinitely holy ; he is perfectly righteous and good.

To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, is the first and great commandment. Destitute of piety, we are destitute of one of the essential and most important ingredients of moral excellence.

This will appear still more evident if we consider that where there is no piety, the opposite dispositions must have the ascendancy in our souls. If we do not love God, we must be at enmity with him; if we do not fear and honour him, we must be living in rebellion against him. Between loving and hating God, between fearing and despising him, there is no middle space. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will cleave to the one and despise the other; we cannot serve God and mammon." Matth. vi. 24. "The friendship of this world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." James iv. 4. Now this enmity exists and reigns in the heart of every unconverted sinner. He is at enmity with the character of God. It is the purity and spirituality of the divine law to which his carnal mind is opposed; for "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence the desire of an irreligious man to exclude devoutness of spirit and life from the constituent parts of true goodness or moral excellence—the cold or the unfriendly eye with which he regards the ordinances of public and family worship—the reluctance with which he engages in these exercises, and the coldness of his heart when he professes to draw near to God. It is not so with a truly good man. He has been taught of God to approve the things that are excellent; he has been taught to know God, and in some measure to love him. He meditates with delight on his character and works; he is afraid of offending him, and finds his chief enjoyment in serving him. "Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

IV. A good man is a man of active and enlightened beneficence.

The Second Commandment of the Law is in these words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and the observance of it in spirit, and in our life and conversation, is as essential to real goodness as the observance of the First. The one is declared to be like the other. They are like one another in magnitude and importance, and like one another because they enjoin the exercise of love, the first enjoining love to God, and the second love to men, for his sake. They are inseparably conjoined, so that he that loves God not only ought to love his brother also, but does love his brother also. Love to men never fails to flow from love to God. Love is the fulfilling of the law; it completes the character of a true Christian. No gifts or endowments, however excellent, can compensate for the want of Christian love. "Though I speak with the tongue of men

and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal."

Love to our neighbour is manifested in all the varied expressions of that affection, in forgiveness of injuries, compassion to the afflicted, charity in our judgment of others; but, above all, in active and enlightened beneficence. And so strongly is this held forth as a part of the Christian character, that the word "good" is frequently used in the restrictive sense of beneficence. "The Lord is good to all; his tender mercies are over all his works." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one dare to die; peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die." "To do good and to communicate, forget not." Of our blessed Saviour it is recorded that he "went about doing good."

But all beneficence is not goodness. There is a fitful beneficence which is unworthy of the name—the beneficence of sudden impulses, and strong but quickly subsiding emotions; the beneficence which needs to be awakened by touching representations of deep and aggravated distress, and ceases to be displayed when these have spent their force. This is not true goodness; it is the beneficence of the sentimentalist, not of the Christian. Then there is the beneficence of the Pharisee, who doeth his alms before men to be seen of them, and to have glory of them. This is hypocrisy; it is the profession of benevolence, where no benevolence exists; it is a sacrifice to vanity and pride, not to God, nor even to men; and it has no reward of our Father who is in heaven. Lastly, there is an extorted beneficence—the beneficence which may be said to be compelled by the example of others—the beneficence of fashion or custom, not of religious or even moral principle.

True goodness or beneficence is different from all these. It has its root in the heart. It springs from Christian charity—from love to men, proceeding from love to God and to Jesus Christ; and, flowing from this fountain, it is constant and uniform—a habit not an act—an ever flowing stream, not the effervescence of momentary feeling. A good man loves his fellow-men, and because he loves them he is earnestly desirous of promoting their real welfare. His "liberal mind deviseth liberal things." He contemplates the immense variety of means by which he may be useful to others; and he forms and adopts the plans by which he may promote their improvement, and augment their happiness. If he be exalted in station and influence, he cheerfully employs his influence and his wealth in doing good. If he be poor, he occupies to the utmost of his power the sphere which Providence has assigned to him; he casts his mite into the treasury of God, and adds to it his fervent supplications for the blessing of the Almighty.

The beneficence of a truly good man is occupied most of all in providing

for the spiritual wants of his fellow-creatures. He would not see the poor pining with cold and hunger, without giving them, if he can, the things which are needful for the body; much less can he behold them perishing for lack of knowledge without using the means of enlightening their dark habitations, and benighted souls. Loving his neighbours with an enlightened love, he must needs seek the good of their immortal spirits; and, knowing from experience the blessedness of belonging to the family of God, and of an inheritance in the heavens, he earnestly desires that others may have the same privilege, and be animated by the same hope. He mourns over the impenitence of the ungodly—he rejoices in their conversion to God—he speaks to those to whom his influence extends about the things which belong to their peace—he instructs the young, he comforts and encourages the aged disciple—he lends his zealous and persevering exertions to the advancement of the kingdom and glory of the Lord Jesus.

Do you wish to know where such good men are to be found? Search for them among men of piety; among unbelieving and worldly-minded men you will search in vain. The man of pleasure lives to himself, and has little or nothing to spare from his own mean and selfish gratifications, for the poor, and the needy, and the perishing. The worshipper of mammon, the man who has embarked all the energies of his soul in the pursuit of wealth and earthly pre-eminence, has no room in his heart for the interests of others. Both are alike indifferent to the spiritual interests of their fellow-men. He, and he alone, who has known and tasted the love which passeth knowledge, and whose soul has received the impressions of the abounding mercy and love of God in Christ Jesus, loves his fellow-men with a pure and enlightened affection, and presents the bright manifestation of active and unwearied beneficence.

V. In the *fifth* place, a good man is one who endeavours to regulate his whole temper and conduct by the maxims and precepts of the gospel of Christ.

I have made this remark not merely for the purpose of including under it many of the minuter precepts of Christianity, which have not been mentioned under the heads of piety towards God, and beneficence to men, but for the purpose of reminding you that a good man, as distinguished from an unconverted man, recognises the law of God as the only rule of his life and conversation. Though we are saved by grace through faith, and our own works are not in any respect the ground of our acceptance with God, the obligation of his law, as a rule of life, cannot cease. The law is not made void, it is established, by faith. The whole law, and every particular precept of the law, is magnified and made hon-

ourable by the shedding of the blood of atonement, and by the fulfilment of all righteousness in the person of Christ. A man, therefore, cannot be a good man, unless it be his constant, and, through grace, his successful endeavour to regulate his whole temper and conduct, by the maxims and precepts of the gospel of Christ. Other men are governed by the maxims and principles of the world, principles often decidedly at variance with the law of God, and the morality of the gospel. A good man steadfastly refuses to submit to their authority. He fears God, and has no other fear. The distinction made by the men of the world between great and little sins—the fraud and deceit sanctioned and allowed by the world in the intercourse and business of life—the profanation of the Lord's Day, and the neglect of the ordinances of religion, involving no loss of character among ungodly men—are all of them repudiated and abhorred by the true Christian. He is sound in God's statutes, and is not ashamed.

In these, and a great variety of other particulars, there is a habitual recognition by a truly good man of the supreme and universal authority of the law of God, as opposed to the maxims and principles of the world. A good man says with David, "I will walk *before the Lord* in the land of the living;" an unconverted man practically declares that he will walk before the world. The world is his God—the opinions and maxims of the world constitute the rule of his conduct—the applause of the world his highest and only reward. The all-perfect Jehovah is the Christian's God—his law is his only rule—and to please Him is the great end of his life and conversation.

VI. A good man is one who earnestly desires the advancement of the Divine glory, and the establishment of his kingdom.

"None of us liveth to himself," saith Paul, "and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be lord both of the dead and of the living."

Love to God being the prevailing affection in the heart of every believer, the manifestation of his glory must be his most earnest wish and desire. The feelings and affections of the good man's soul are poured forth, first of all, in the accents of adoring gratitude and praise—"Praise God, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul." These are the breathings of the good man's soul—the expressions at once of his



own adoring wonder and gratitude, and of his earnest desire that all God's works should praise him, and that his saints should bless him. He regards him as king over all; and it is his fervent wish and prayer that all his creatures, animate and inanimate, should praise him. More especially, bearing in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings, and Head over all things to his Church; he takes the deepest interest in everything that tends to the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. He rejoices in the success of faithful missionaries; he bewails the obstacles which prevent or retard the progress of Christian knowledge and pure religion. For nothing does he strive or pray more fervently, than that the kingdom of God may come, and his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

A good man's desire for the advancement of the glory and kingdom of Christ is not confined to the duties of prayer and praise. He knows that the honour of his Divine Master is closely connected with the temper and conduct of his professed disciples. "They are his witnesses. They hold forth the word of life; and in proportion to the truth of their testimony, and the brightness with which they shine as lights in the world, is the honour which they reflect on Christ, and on his gospel, and the impulse given, by their instrumentality, to the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Actions seemingly unimportant, derive, from this circumstance, a magnitude in his eyes which they would not otherwise possess. The spiritual condition of other men, and the reign of Christ in their souls, may be materially affected by them. Therefore, he feels all the force of the Apostle's exhortation, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." He is actuated by a jealous, a holy solicitude that nothing may be done by himself or others, which may encourage other men in the commission of what they believe to be sinful, but that every part of their conduct may be so entirely in agreement with the spirit of the gospel and the law of Christ, as to curb and restrain the wickedness of the ungodly, and to strengthen and encourage the hearts of true believers in the diligent pursuit and practice of true holiness.

Having thus endeavoured to answer the question, What is a good man? let me, in conclusion, request the readers of this discourse to observe, that every one of the features in the character of a truly good man is positive. It is not the mere absence of vice—it is something positively good in the sight of God. If you wish to lay claim to the character of good men, in the Scripture sense of that appellation, you must not think it enough that you are not infidels, nor apostates, nor profane swearers, nor revengeful; you must believe with the heart, you must worship God in the spirit, you must love one another, with a pure heart, fervently; you must not only keep God's commandments, but, in keeping them, you must be

acquainted by the principles of the gospel, and you must have for your end the advancement of the Divine glory.

Is this the goodness required in the Word of God? Who then can wonder at the testimony of Jehovah himself, when He looked down from heaven on the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." Who can wonder that he whom the Lord himself pronounced to be "a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil," exclaimed, when he contrasted the glory of the Lord with his own sinfulness, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

"I have seen an end of all perfection," said the Psalmist, "thy commandment is exceeding broad." Oh, with what gladness ought we all to fly to the all-sufficient atonement, the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ! Nowhere else can we find refuge to our souls, and a sure foundation of hope. With what earnestness ought we to seek the free Spirit of the Lord, who alone can begin and perfect that holiness without which no man can see the Lord! Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights. Let us ask and we shall receive; let us seek and we shall find.

My Christian friends, ye who have reason to believe that the good work of sanctification is begun in your souls, see that, in humble dependence on promised grace, ye go on unto perfection. Cultivate diligently and perseveringly every Christian grace and virtue. Remember that as in the sun of the firmament it is the union of many coloured rays which forms the light of day, so it is by the combination of all the Christian graces that the true believer becomes the light of the world. Abstain from that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be not contented with being blameless and harmless, but abound in every good work. Above all, see to it that your goodness be not like the morning cloud and the early dew which goeth away; but the goodness, in other words, the true holiness which, rooted in a living faith, and strengthened by the hope of an undefiled and unfading inheritance, flourishes like the palm tree on earth, and brings forth its full-ripe fruit in the courts of our God in heaven.

## SERMON XXVIII.

CHRIST SUBDUES A PEOPLE TO HIMSELF.

BY THE LATE REV. CHRISTOPHER GREIG, A.M., ST NINIANS.\*

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."—PSALM cx. 3.

THIS is a psalm of David, and every part of it speaks of David's Lord. It contains a beautiful description of Messiah as a king, as a priest, and as a victorious conqueror over all his enemies. Moved by the Holy Ghost, David thus spake of him, who was to be his Son according to the flesh; and having the eyes of his understanding enlightened, he rejoiced in the prospect of the Saviour's day, he saw it, and was glad. He was, indeed, highly favoured with bright views of Messiah's person and offices; nor is there any part of the ancient prophets more frequently quoted, or more particularly applied to the Saviour, than the psalm whence the words of our text are taken. (Mat. xxii. 43; Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13.)

The psalmist lays deep the foundation of Messiah's kingdom. He declares the divine decree by which Jehovah appointed him a king, and gave to him a kingdom. The Lord (Jehovah) said to my Lord, "sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Messiah loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore was he anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom. The glory of a king consists in the multitude of his people. Messiah is a king, but he is described as ruling in the midst of his enemies. Has he, then, none but these over whom he is to reign—none that *willingly* do him service? Was he to spend his labour in vain, his time and strength for that which profiteth nothing? No! he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand. Jehovah promises to him, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

\* The author of this discourse died very suddenly on 11th April 1844, after a long and faithful ministry. His death arrested the execution of the purpose, which he had intimated just a week previously, of sending a sermon to the Free Church Pulpit. The present sermon is selected from his MSS. by his surviving friends; and however interesting a memorial it may be to those who were accustomed to listen to his living voice, and who enjoyed the benefit of his able and affectionate services, none will perceive so readily as they, that the discourse, as here presented, labours under the disadvantage of being a posthumous publication.

In these words are contained 1st, A description of the character and condition of Messiah's subjects—they are his people. 2d, A prediction concerning them—they shall be willing. 3d, The time and the means of its accomplishment are specified—in the day of thy power.

I. The subjects of Messiah's kingdom are his *people*, because they are given to him by the Father—because they are bought with a price, even with his own precious blood—and because they are created anew by his Holy Spirit; being thus enabled freely to give up themselves to be his only—his for ever.

1. Messiah's subjects are his people, because they are given to him by the Father. "No man can come to me," saith Christ, "except the Father who hath sent me draw him." This impossibility is the result of that aversion which every child of Adam naturally has to the holy, humbling religion of Jesus. We will not come to him that we might have life; for by nature we are sinful, and we love to remain so. When all flesh had corrupted their way, Jehovah might, without any imputation on his justice, have left them to reap the fruit of their own doings. For angels who kept not their first estate, no Saviour was provided, no arm of mercy was extended for their deliverance. But God beheld man with an eye of compassion; he said, "deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Jesus was appointed the captain of salvation, to conduct many sons to glory. No sooner had sin corrupted human nature in its root, than a ray of hope was communicated to fallen man, which through successive ages brightened apace, till at last the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings. Many subjects were indeed given unto Jesus, previous to his appearance among men; and all who in any age have ever come to him, were given him of the Father. Though we have rebelled, God is still Lord over us; we are still his creatures; and as none of us has any claim upon his favour, so he may quicken whom he will, and whom he will he may leave to harden themselves through the deceitfulness of sin. And "who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Though now we may set our mouths against the heavens in our blasphemous talk, yet the time approaches when "every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." If we do not now submit to Jesus, to be the willing subjects of his kingdom, we shall hereafter be compelled to feign submission, for Jehovah himself hath sworn that before him every knee must bow, and that to him every tongue must confess.

What our Lord said of his immediate disciples is applicable to all his followers: "thine they were and thou gavest them me." We are God's creatures; our hearts are in his hand; he can turn them as he pleaseth; but unless we be thus turned, we will never cordially submit to have Christ to reign over us. No full nor faithful declaration of the truth—no alluring representation of the Saviour's compassion and love—no affecting description of the horrors which await the finally impenitent—nay, not miracles themselves, forcing conviction on the understanding, can ever prevail with an unholy creature to become a willing subject of Messiah. They must be drawn of the Father—they must be all taught of God. Jehovah beholds the end from the beginning, and the determinations of Omniscience hang not dependant on the feeble sons of earth. What think you, brethren, is it reasonable to suppose that the Sovereign of the Universe must await in anxious suspense, must remain ignorant of the consequences of his own operations, till a creature which he has made—till a creature which ~~has~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~un~~made itself—till a creature whose desperately wicked heart cannot of itself think a right thought—till such a creature as this shall have resolved what it is to do, and how it is to act? Shall we suppose that after all his agonies, and tears, and blood, it depended entirely on the will of man, whether Messiah should see of the travail of his soul, or all these have been wasted in vain? No, let not us pretend to limit the Holy One of Israel, nor attempt with our narrow span to measure Him whose understanding is infinite, and whose ways are past finding out. He who appointed Messiah a King, appointed him also the subjects over whom he is to reign. "Even so, O Father, for thus it seemed good in thy sight." Jehovah promised to Christ a numerous offspring, and this promise must be fulfilled. Most, if not all, who have ever submitted to Christ, have declared that naturally they were averse, and that divine power was requisite to overcome this aversion. Still there is no divine decree, far less any positive operation on the mind, preventing men from coming to Christ. This is the result of their love of sin. So that the two positions to be held—whether we can reconcile them or not, are—all that come to Christ are drawn, taught, and influenced of God—all that do not come are prevented, neither by divine influence nor decree, but simply by their own love of sin.

2. Messiah's subjects are his, because he gave himself for them, that being bought with a price, they might be to him a peculiar people. Man, forsaking God, became the slave of sin, and was led captive by Satan. Satan's was indeed an usurped authority, of which by mere power he might have been dispossessed; but in this case the justice of God sanctioned the accusations of Satan. When the accuser of the human

race declared that man was a rebel, and as such deserving of death, in this the father of lies only stated the truth. Die then man, or justice must, unless some one should be found of power sufficient to sustain and pay the wages of sin, and of love so unparalleled as to make him submit to so costly a sacrifice to retrieve our ruined cause. In vain would we have cast our despairing eyes around; throughout the whole universe of God, Christ alone was to be found at once able and willing to undertake our cause. On me, said he, let the sword of divine justice fall—let these my people go free. Punishment was exacted, and he became answerable; and, by the once offering up of himself, accomplished what the blood of bulls and of goats could never have effected, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. The sins of his people lay heavy on him in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary. This armed his enemies with power against him. Had it not been for thee O Christian! scribes and Pharisees, rulers and priests had in vain cried out, crucify him, crucify him. Had it not been for thee, Herod with all his men of might durst not have set him at nought, nor Pilate dared to lift up a scourge against him. Your sins nailed him to the cross—they pierced his hands and his sides. By thus dying, he accomplished the deliverance of his people—delivered them from the curse of the law, and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Is it not equitable that the lives which he had thus rescued from sin and Satan, from death and hell, should be devoted to his service. He gave *himself* for them with the express view that he might redeem them from all their iniquity, and purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Paul urges on the Corinthians this strong and powerful claim, that they were bought with a price, a costly price, and should not, therefore, henceforward live to sin or to self, to the world or the flesh, but remembering whose they are, to live to him who died for them, and rose again.

3. Messiah's subjects are his, because by his spirit and power he forms them anew; fitting them now for his service *here*, and for the full enjoyment of heaven *hereafter*. To rescue men from external slavery, yet to leave their slavish habits and propensities in full force, would not greatly ameliorate their condition nor render them proper subjects of a free state. Christ does more than this for his people, and thereby his right to their persons and services is strengthened and confirmed. "Behold," says he, "I make all things new," and through his creative energy new light shines into the understanding, and new affections are kindled in the heart—new principles are implanted in the mind, and new hopes gladden the soul—new desires influence the will, and new actions characterise the life—old things pass away, and

all things become new. All this is effected by his blessed spirit. "Lo," said Jesus, when about to leave this scene of suffering and of sorrow, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." The disciples to whom this promise was made, continued not long upon earth, and we now behold him with the eye of flesh no more. Yet is he still present with his people. Yea he will never leave nor forsake them. Soon was his promise fulfilled, and the Comforter, sent from on high, took up his abode in the hearts of his people. They thus become temples of the Holy Ghost in which he delights to dwell, and will for ever be glorified; they are members of that body of which Christ is at once the sovereign and head, and one spirit animates the whole. If slight benefits conferred, or trivial changes of character produced, furnish claims of gratitude or of submission, what must be due from Messiah's subjects to their Lord, who makes them new creatures, and fits them for the society of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? In consequence of this, whatever their previous character or conduct may have been, they now perceive that Christ is indeed a King; they cordially submit to him as their king; and, by cheerfully submitting themselves to him as his subjects, they confirm his right to their persons and services, they secure their own felicity in time and for ever, and they verify the prediction of our text, "Thy people shall be willing."

II. To this prediction we proposed, in the second place, to direct your attention. Worldly kingdoms have often been established by violence—they rule over the body only, they govern by fear and terror. In all these respects, Christ's kingdom is not of this world. His people are willing to enter into his kingdom in the way of his own appointment, they are willing to obey the laws of his kingdom, and they are willing to submit to that discipline which his infinite wisdom sees meet for them. By these the true subjects of Messiah's kingdom are distinguished, not only from the subjects of earthly kings, but from all who may call themselves by Christ's name, but whose hearts are hostile to his person and government.

1. Messiah's subjects are a willing people, and are willing to have Christ as a king, inasmuch as they willingly enter into his kingdom in the way of his own appointment. Earthly sovereigns acquire subjects by birth or by naturalization. By our natural birth, one and all of us, alas, are subjects of a very different kingdom—children exposed to wrath even as others. Though Christ's kingdom was established with the most liberal views to collect subjects from every nation and tongue under heaven, and though the freest invitations are addressed to men, yet not a few turn away disgusted with the mode of admis-

sion. In the eager pursuit of trifles, multitudes turn a deaf ear to all the glories of Christ's kingdom, and to all the invitations addressed to them. Not a few may be ready to admit that its blessings are of unspeakable value—peace in life, hope in death, and happiness for ever—but then they are dissatisfied as to the mode by which these are to be attained. They are not willing to admit that they have forfeited every claim to the divine favour—that they must come as criminals, condemned and destitute, and must plead for admission only through the death and sacrifice of that very Lord who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers. Enlightened by his word and spirit, Messiah's subjects see themselves in some measure as God sees them, and this removes that wrong estimate of their own character which lies at the foundation of their hostility to Christ's kingdom. By the same means they are brought to perceive somewhat of the suitableness of this method of deliverance—suitable in its plan and end to the glorious character of Jehovah—suitable in its nature and blessings to the wretched condition of the creature. Finding that they are indebted ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay, they are willing to accept of pardon through Christ's atonement—finding that they are so defiled that the waters of a thousand rivers could not cleanse them from a single stain, they are willing to wash in the fountain opened for the remission of sins—finding that their best righteousness is as filthy rags, they are willing to be clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness may not appear—and finding that they have forfeited all title to life, present or future, they are now willing to accept of eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. Messiah's subjects are willing to yield unreserved obedience to the laws of his kingdom. In the kingdoms of this world, multitudes are daily violating the laws, numbers are murmuring against them as harsh or unjust; and, what is still worse, in manifold instances, there may be too much truth in these reflections. Even among the professed subjects of Messiah's kingdom, too many are to be found, who in these respects resemble the subjects of earthly sovereigns. They violate the law in practice; in heart they conceive, perhaps in words they express, that it is unnecessarily strict in its precepts, or unrighteously severe in its penalty. This might be the view formerly maintained by Christ's subjects, now that they understand something of the nature and privileges of his kingdom, it is so no more. With the servants of God in former days, they are ready to exclaim, "The law of the Lord is holy, and just, and good. O how I love thy law, it is my study all the day: write it on my heart, engrave it on my inward part." Iniquities may, at times, prevail against them, but they do not on this account seek a mitigation of the law, but the destruc-



tion of the body of sin and death. Deliverance from the power of sin they perceive to be a part, an important part, of Christ's salvation ; whilst conformity to the will of God is perceived to be a characteristic feature of Christ's loyal subjects, is felt to be a source of present peace, as well as that by which they are made meet for future glory. Whilst other men are satisfied with mere bodily service, with external, partial, or hypocritical obedience, it will be their aim to worship God in spirit and in truth, and habitually to have respect to all his commandments. The hypocrite may toil through all the external forms of religion, and show devotion's every character, except the heart ; but the genuine subject draws near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. In every solemn ordinance it is his desire to present himself a free-will offering before the Lord, holy and acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. Brethren, is this your desire ? Have you this day come up willingly to the house of God ; and is this the result of deliberate choice ? Were the Lord now to address us, as he did his servant of old, what dost thou here Elijah ?—what answer could we make ? With what views have we come up hither, with what views are we about to seat ourselves at the Table of the Lord ? It cannot be *surely* that we have not thought on the subject, nor examined our motives ? Is it a willing service that we are about to perform ? Do we conceive that it is but a decent mark of respect to be paid to the religion of our country ? Is it necessary that we should comply with this form to preserve our character for decency and sobriety in the world ? Have you been urged by the importunity of friends, and are you disposed to follow a custom, the neglect of which might expose you to the charge of singularity ? Have you come to atone for past transgression, or by this day's service do you aim deceitfully to quiet that internal monitor which tells you that all is not right at home ? None of these, brethren, are the characteristic marks of a people who willingly offer themselves unto the Lord. The love of Christ constrains them to live no more unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again. In obedience to their Lord, they eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him ; and whilst they thus seek communion with the Father and with the Son by one Spirit, they pledge themselves, by his grace, henceforward to run in the way of his commandments.

3. Messiah's subjects are willing to submit to the discipline of his kingdom. In a present world, Christ is educating or training up his people for mansions of eternal rest. With this view he has given his word, his ordinances, and the precious promises of his Holy Spirit. In subserviency to the same end, are all the dispensations of his providence towards his own people. His providence, indeed, extendeth over all—without him a sparrow falleth not to the ground, and

the hairs on our head are all numbered. All power in heaven and in earth is given to Christ, but especially power over all flesh; and this power is by him exercised for the destruction of his enemies, for the protection and improvement of his own people. He allots to them their places of abode, and their peculiar trials. Many things may occur painful to their feelings—many things from which flesh and blood would wish to be exempted. But in as far as they are the willing people of Jehovah, they will say, “not our will but thine be done.” A lively conviction that Christ best knows what is good for them, and that he will assuredly bestow it, leads them, even in difficult scenes, to acquiesce, saying, “what thou dost we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.” Parents tell their children that they cannot at present understand or enter into their plans, but that soon they will perceive both their wisdom and their goodness. If, then, it is our duty to submit to earthly parents, much more ought we to be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, that our souls may live. Whilst this submission is inculcated on us in Scripture, whilst we must be convinced that it is highly reasonable, let it never be forgotten that it tends much to our present comfort, as well as to prepare us for future blessedness.

III. The time when, and the means by which, they shall be made willing—“in the day of thy power.” The exertion of Messiah’s power is requisite to bring the most amiable of the human race cordially to submit to him as their rightful Lord; and by the exertion of this power, the most hardened rebel may be transformed into a willing subject. As a prophetic intimation of Messiah’s future kingdom, these words had their remarkable accomplishment in the morning of the gospel day. Previous to this, or even to his appearance on earth, Jesus had conducted many sons to glory. But the boundaries of his kingdom were then narrow, and the displays of his powers small, compared with what they were after his resurrection and ascension. In the lowest state of his humiliation, and when the Jews insulted over him that he was unable to save himself, even that was the day of his power. He gave life to the penitent thief who was sharing with him the agonies of death, and the ignominy of crucifixion. After his resurrection he told his disciples that all power in heaven and in earth was given into his hand; and as a proof of this, not many days elapsed till they were endowed with power from on high. The Lord himself did give the word—great was the company of them who published it. Then was, indeed, the day of the Saviour’s power, and more than the womb of the morning he had the dew of his youth. From Jerusalem, where the gospel was first preached, it burst forth with irresistible power, and spread with astonishing rapidity throughout the whole Roman em-

pire. Neither the wisdom nor the power of man was able to resist its progress, or to support the sinking fabric of heathen idolatry. The temples of idols were deserted, and incense and a pure offering were presented to God, in places which had been the abodes of horrid cruelty. Then Satan's power fell as lightning from heaven, and the pillars of the kingdom of darkness did tremble. The people willingly presented themselves before the Lord, thousands were born in a day, but it was the day of Messiah's power. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel, with the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit, he went forth conquering and to conquer. He pointed the arrows of conviction, and caused them to penetrate the hardest hearts; he poured celestial light on the eye balls of the spiritually blind, and quickened those who were dead in sin. His spirit, communicated from on high, elevated their affections above the world, caused them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and even amidst shame, and persecution, and reproach, enabled them to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Though now we see not such displays of his power, yet that power ceases not to exist, nor do the triumphs of his grace cease to be felt. He is equally attentive to the interests of his people now, as in the first ages of the church, nor will he ever leave himself without a people. The word of Jehovah falls not to the ground, nor shall his promise return void of its accomplishment. He acts as a sovereign, indeed, in dispensing his favours, but every sinner rescued from destruction, is a proof that Messiah both retains and exercises his power. When he has many sons to bring home, he raises up fit instruments, and sends forth labourers, whose labours he will abundantly bless. He beholds his people scattered remote through the world—he sees them dead in trespasses and sins—he sends forth his word and quickens them. They who were formerly the slaves of Satan, now become the willing subjects of Christ. They who were tyrannised over by their unhallowed propensities, and led captive by evil habits, have now their bonds burst asunder, and are admitted to the privileges of the sons of God. He beholds them wandering in a desert path, where no city of rest is to be found. Sometimes he suffers them to weary themselves in the pursuit of deluding phantoms, and unsatisfactory joys; nor is it till the scene draws to a close, and when the enemy may conceive himself secure of his prey, that he snatches them from destruction. Again, he may sanctify from the womb—expose to the fiercest assaults of temptation, and display the might of his power in enabling the child of dust to vanquish every foe, till Satan himself is subdued under his feet. But though the means which he employs in bringing them to himself are many and various, and though he may sometimes conduct them through the waste howling wilderness, yet will he

bring them all in safety to the mansions of eternal rest. Of all that are given to him he will lose none, for he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Not all the artifices of Satan, not all the allurements of an ensnaring world, nor the deceitful workings of remaining corruption in the heart, shall ever be able to cause one of the real followers of Jesus to fall short of everlasting happiness. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Millions of our fallen race have already been quickened by his spirit, and made willing in the day of his power; and whatever opposition may be made, the time approaches when Christ's gospel shall be more widely spread, and its influence more effectually felt. It will indeed be a day of his power, when his ancient people the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentile nations, shall be brought in, and when his name shall be known and adored, from the rising to the setting sun.

Brethren, we live in the day of Messiah's power. Even now is he engaged in conducting many sons to glory. Nor will he cease from this employment whilst there is a sinner on earth to be made a saint in heaven. Though we may be now ready to exclaim who hath believed the gospel report, yet when he shall say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back; when he shall bring his sons from far, even from the ends of all the earth, they shall be a countless multitude, which no man can number. Then shall the Mediator himself appear saying, "Behold, here am I, and the people whom thou hast given me, not one is lacking." The day of his mediatory power shall then cease, and he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. Nor shall the Son then cease to reign—"For thy throne, O God, is for ever"—though important changes may take place in his mode of reigning. The powers with which, as Mediator, he is invested, and which he now exercises, in enlightening the darkened mind—in quickening the dead in sin—in preserving the vital spark in the soul, and in conducting through much external and internal opposition, to the mansions of eternal rest—these powers shall cease to be exercised when there are no more darkened minds to be enlightened, and no more enemies to assail or annoy his willing subjects. Still, as saints on earth look to him as the source of their life, and the captain of their salvation; so the saints in heaven never forget that it was he who washed them from their sins in his blood, and made them kings and priests to God for ever.

Brethren, Jehovah declares that Messiah's subjects shall be a willing people. Is this our character? Are we looking for a kingdom which cannot be moved—for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and

maker is God? Are we willing, then, to give up the world as our portion, to take up our cross—avouch that the Lord is our God—to dedicate ourselves to his service, and, trusting to his promised aid, are we ready to say, “All that the Lord God commands us will we do, and be obedient?” Then may you go to the altar of God. If we are unwilling, does this make void the promise of God? No, it only shows that we are not of Messiah’s willing subjects, and of course have no right to the children’s bread. Have we ever asked of Messiah to make us willing? Do you feel your own backwardness, and do you believe that he is both able and willing to work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

Brethren, the great powers with which Messiah is invested are equally intended for the destruction of his enemies, and for the protection of his friends. Here he rules in the midst of his enemies. His flock is a little flock, the world around them lieth in wickedness, even in them the spark of heavenly life may be feeble, with much remaining dross to bury, and many enemies to extinguish it. You that have been made willing, the greatness of his power need not alarm. Nay, this is the source of your rejoicing under the humbling feeling of your own weakness and infirmities—under the alarms which the numbers and strength of your enemies must excite, “that greater is he who is with you than all that can be against you.” Now, even to his enemies, he stretches forth the sceptre of mercy. Bow down then before him. Submit to have him to rule over you, ere it be converted into a rod of iron with which he will dash in pieces the most powerful of his foes.

## SERMON XXIX.

CHRIST ON THE CROSS DRAWING ALL MEN TO HIM.

BY THE REV. PATRICK FAIRBAIRN, SALTON.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—JOHN. xii. 32.

Thus, the Evangelist immediately adds, our Lord "spake signifying what death he should die;" viz. that he was to suffer death as a malefactor, by being suspended on a cross. That such *should* have been the meaning of our Lord, when he spake of being lifted up from, or off, the earth, is scarcely what we should at first have expected to be told. It seems to put a somewhat lower meaning on his words than they might fairly be understood to carry; and as it does not appear a thing of essential moment, whether Christ should have suffered death on an instrument which raised him a little off the surface of the earth, or in some other way which admitted of his foot still resting on it, when he speaks of being lifted up from the earth as a great event in his history, which was to draw after it results of unspeakable magnitude, we naturally think of his entire withdrawal from the earth—his ascension from earth to heaven, there to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and to wield the sceptre of universal empire. So, evidently, did the persons who heard him understand his words; for they presently observed, "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever, and how sayest thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up?"—showing that, by his being lifted up, they supposed him to mean his removal from earth to heaven.

It is not to be doubted, however, that what the Evangelist says is true; he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; the interpretation he puts upon Christ's words may be as safely and confidently relied on, as the words of Christ himself; and, however natural any other interpretation may seem, when he distinctly assures us that the event referred to was the fact of Christ's crucifixion, not a doubt, not a suspicion may cross our breast, that such was indeed the case. Certainly on one or two other occasions, when Jesus spake of his being lifted up, it was in like manner his suspension on the cross that he had in his eye, as when he said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself;" and again, No. 30.—SER. 29.

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up.” So that it was in perfect accordance with our Lord’s general use of the expression to say, that when he spake of being lifted up, it was to signify by what death he should die.

At the same time, while we must understand the word, of our Lord’s crucifixion, we evidently cannot understand what he says in connection with this, as taking place in the precise moment of his crucifixion. For it was certainly not at the very time of his hanging on the cross, that men either knew he was the Messiah, or were drawn to him as such; one only seemed to know that, and to feel the attractive power of the cross, while the Saviour hung on it—the penitent malefactor. Nor can we say that it did begin to be in any measure known and felt in the world till he was lifted up in another sense, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of the Father. The people at large regarded his crucifixion, so far from being a proof of his Messiahship, as the most conclusive evidence of his being only an impostor and blasphemer; and no other impression seems generally to have prevailed concerning him, than of “that deceiver,” whose power and pretensions had been effectually crushed by his crucifixion, until that memorable day of Pentecost, when having gone into the heavens, and received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he began to bend the hearts of men as by a rushing mighty wind, and carry them captive at his will.

Why, then, it may be asked, does our Lord point to his being lifted up on the cross, as that with which his drawing power and influence stood immediately connected? Why not rather point at once to that other and more proper lifting up, that exaltation to all power and glory in heaven, which was the immediate forerunner of his exercised dominion upon earth, and without which his death on the cross practically did not avail? Before we answer this question, mark the mighty difference, the absolute contrast, between these two liftings up of Christ; for the one, you will observe, points to the extreme depth of his humiliation, the other to the utmost height of his exaltation and glory: his lifting up on the cross of Calvary exhibits him in the last condition of suffering humanity, a spectacle before heaven and earth of shame and agony; but his lifting up to the right hand of God, his occupation of the throne of heaven, as Lord of angels and of men. And yet it is not this, but the other—not the highest, but the lowest point in his wonderful history—not his possession of the throne of heaven, but his exhibition on a malefactor’s cross, with which he here connects the blessed fruits of his mediation. And why with that? Why, but to let us know, that *there* lay the groundwork of his kingly power and glory, and the fountainhead of that healing virtue, which was thenceforth to be sending out its streams of blessing for the regeneration and salvation of a lost world. From

that moment all was his, and it mattered comparatively little where his personal abode might be, whether in the heights above, or in the depths beneath; the seed-corn has fallen into the earth, and the glorious harvest of redeemed souls cannot fail to spring from it.

We judge too superficially if we suppose, that Christ's being lifted up on the cross, and dying the death of the vilest malefactor, rather than any other, was a sort of accidental thing. It was done, as we are expressly told, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," in order that his outward condition might fitly correspond with his real state; as being made a curse for us, that we might inherit a blessing. Jesus lifted up on the cross is, in other words, the Lord of glory bearing in his own person the awful curse due to our sins, and yielding himself up as a willing victim to that death which through eternity we had deserved to die. *Then* it was that the battle was fought and the victory won, for then the guilt of sin was atoned, divine justice satisfied, an everlasting and all-sufficient righteousness brought in, the bars of our prison-house for ever broken, and the way to eternal life laid clearly open. And hence every thing in the history of Christ's person and kingdom is referred back to this act of wondrous humiliation and suffering obedience, as the ground out of which it sprung, and the means by which it was secured. *For* this he is exalted to the highest heavens, crowned with majesty and honour, and receives a name that is above every name. His sufferings on the cross are the purchase-money of his whole inheritance of glory. And they are, too, the treasury with which he carries on his spiritual merchandize on earth, and wins souls for his kingdom. "Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." Though now seated amidst the most excellent glory, it is as seen upon the cross of Calvary that he reigns and conquers. It is this which slays the enmity of the sinner's heart—this which allays the terrors of the sinner's conscience. It is this which leads the wretched, outcast prodigal, to recross the awful gulph that separates between him and his Father's house, and enables him to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one, who seeks to hinder his return. In this one fact, that Christ has suffered unto death on the accursed tree, is found all that is needed to ensure peace and blessedness to the child of God, as well as discomfiture and confusion to the powers of darkness.

We see, therefore, that the remark of the Evangelist, which at first sight might appear superficial, turns out, when carefully examined, to be the most profound; and that this declaration of Christ only acquires its real meaning when viewed in the sense the Evangelist puts on it. Of the two kinds of lifting up of which the expression might have been understood, that which was connected with Christ's deepest humiliation,



sufferings, and death, was unspeakably the most important; for it is the foundation of the other—the procuring cause of every thing belonging to it, and of every thing also which is brought to bear for good on the condition and prospects of men. And in this we find the highest manifestation of the truth, that in God's work of grace, his redemption-work, all is above and against nature. His thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor his ways as man's ways. How astonishing in itself, and how humbling to the pride of man, that what is the consummation of Divine wisdom, should have been considered by him as foolishness! that the very heart and centre of the whole scheme of God for the salvation of the world should stand in the lifting up of the Son of Man on a malefactor's cross! The world, when it beheld the sight, could find occasion only for raillery and scorn. It could see nothing in such a spectacle, but what seemed fitted to awaken its indignation and contempt. And alas! it sees little else still; for though it can speak with becoming reverence and respect of a crucified Redeemer, yet to take this as the object of heartfelt confidence and holy joy, is the farthest possible from its desire or purpose.

I. We have thus spoken of the first thing to which our attention is called in the words of our text,—viz. the situation in which it presents Jesus to our view, as lifted up, or hanging on the cross. That such is the situation here described, both the explanation of the Evangelist, and the nature of the case itself, when properly considered, put beyond a doubt. And if it should still seem strange why our Lord should have used a word for that purpose, which might equally, and indeed more naturally, mean his removal out of this lower world to a higher, we must remember that it was, at the time he uttered it, a prophecy, and that, like all prophecy, it required to be wrapt in a certain degree of mystery until it was fulfilled.

II. But let us now turn to the second point included in the declaration of our text, the drawing power and influence connected with Christ's being lifted up on the cross. "And I, if I be lifted" (or, after that I have been lifted) "up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The drawing here intended, if it may not be altogether and exclusively understood of a friendly attachment, a drawing with sweet constraint and love, must certainly be viewed as mainly intending that. For in this sense we find the expression used elsewhere by Christ in this gospel, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. And the connection also in which it is here used, would lead us thus to understand it. Christ has been speaking of glorifying the Father, by casting out the prince of this world, and by becoming the author

of a godly seed who were to spring out of him, after he had fallen, like seed-corn into the earth. And when he goes on to say now, that "if he were lifted up he would draw all men unto him," we cannot but regard him as chiefly referring to the effect of his crucifixion in rescuing sinners from the power of the destroyer, and binding them to himself with cords of gratitude and love. Now, when our Lord connects this drawing with his being lifted up or crucified, what does it import?

1. It imports, first, that such must have been the design of his crucifixion. The drawing that was to take place afterwards, he eyes and rests upon with holy satisfaction, as the blessed end and result of that previous lifting up; and in thus looking onward to what was to follow the cross, he plainly tells us of the design with which it was to be met and endured—the design on *his* part in suffering himself to be lifted up, not of those, certainly, who were the instruments of doing it; for they thought only of wreaking on him their wicked spite and malice, while he willingly gave himself as a lamb to the sacrifice, though he had power either to lay down his life or to withhold it. The greatness and value of the end reconciled him to the painfulness of the means by which alone it could be reached; and "for the joy that was set before him"—the joy, namely, of being the author of eternal redemption to all that should believe on his name—for that joy, "he endured the cross, despising the shame."

O what a depth of love must have existed in his bosom to move him, though the Lord of glory, to become such a spectacle of reproach and suffering! What an infinite price does it betoken him to have set on the work of drawing sinners to himself, when he could willingly withdraw from his Father's bosom, and travel through such scenes of agony and blood to have it accomplished! He saw them from the height of his sanctuary, as afar off, in a state of perilous alienation and apostacy; and, like the good Shepherd, he would, since nothing else could suffice, lay down his life for the perishing sheep, that they might again be drawn into the fold of peace and safety. And shall this gracious design, thine own recovery, O sinner, from sin and ruin, be less to thee than it was to him? Wilt thou count it less thy business to be brought from the brink of everlasting perdition, than it was his to seek and bring thee? O did he leave his kingly throne, and become above all others a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that he might provide for thee a pathway out of nature's condemnation to the blessed regions of eternal glory; and dost thou care so little for the well-being of thy soul, as not to be at the pains to profit by his humiliation, and tread the pathway he has done so much to provide? If salvation be so slight a matter with thee now, and a Saviour's purposes of grace so little heeded, how shalt thou be able to complain if he deals with thee at the last on

thine own reckoning ? “ It was nothing in thy account that I bled and died on the accursed tree ; thou wouldst not suffer thyself to be drawn into my fellowship, after all that was done to make it possible, so little were thy thoughts taken up with sin and hell, salvation and glory : See, then, how thou canst now do without it ! how, away from me and alone, thou canst bear the thunderbolts of heaven’s wrath ! ” Be persuaded rather to kiss the Son, while he is revealed in love, and enter into his gracious design as inseparably connected with your highest good ; seeing that, if not saved by him, you inevitably perish, rejoice in the thought that he is willing to save—so willing, that he embraced the cross with all its shame and suffering, just that he might bestow salvation on the lost.

2. Again, when Christ speaks of being lifted up, that he might draw all men unto him, it implies that there was a fitness in this for compassing the design, or that his crucifixion was the most apt, powerful, and effective means for producing such a result, as the drawing of men to him. Wonderful as the goodness was which distinguished his course on earth, and bright as were the rays of glory which shone around his whole career, he still made little progress in winning the hearts of men. Knowing, as he well did, the hardness and obstinacy of these hearts, he knew it was not enough—that something must yet be done much more fitted to attract and move ; but it shall be done, says he, when I am lifted up. When I have been bruised to death on the accursed tree, then other effects shall begin to flow, the glory of the Lord shall be seen to shine from me with surpassing brightness, and even the hardest hearts shall be melted and subdued.

This entirely accords with all Christ’s dealings towards men, whom he ever treats as rational and thinking creatures ; not as machines that are simply to be impelled by the strong hand of power, but as possessed of wills that are to be consulted, influenced, persuaded ; and so requiring, to be addressed by arguments or motives fitted to produce the desired result. And such means, whatever the result may be toward which they are directed, being chosen by infinite wisdom, are always the very best that could be selected or devised. If this be the case generally, especially must it be so here, where his grandest work lies, and his highest glory is concerned. The end here is, to have sinners drawn to him with the cords of love, and united in an everlasting fellowship of peace and blessing ; and the chosen means for attaining it is, the exhibition of a crucified Redeemer, lifted up and dying for sinners on a malefactor’s cross. Where, we may well exclaim, could any thing be found so well adapted for such a purpose ? What could even be conceived more admirably fitted to reach the inmost feelings of the heart, and move it out of all the thoughts and devices which naturally tend to keep it in aliena-

tion from the life of God? "To behold him, who was God manifest in the flesh, full of pure and holy life, by vital union with the eternal God-head, voluntarily devoted and made subject to the most painful and ignominious suffering, purposely to make atonement for the offence done by revolted creatures against their rightful Lord! What rocks would not rend at this spectacle! Enough to put creation, as it did, into a paroxysm, and bring on it travailling-pangs! And how strange, if the hearts of men, only next and most closely concerned, should alone be unmoved, and without the sense of such pangs! Well might it be said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"—not intending so much the effect wrought, as the power or natural fitness of the cause. As if he should say, This were enough to vanquish and subdue the world, to mollify every heart of man, and to leave upon those, who will not be drawn, the character of most inhuman creatures, unworthy to be called men." (Howe).

Is it possible, brethren, that this should be the character of any of you? Can you look on that cross, where heaven appears giving its noblest demonstration of love to the sinner, at the very time that it is taking its most fearful vengeance on sin, without being drawn to forsake sin and surrender yourselves to God? If it should be so, then we must tell you, there are no bands more powerful with which you can be drawn; heaven itself has no stronger arguments with which to prevail over your unwillingness—it has shot its last and mightiest weapon; and if you perish still in alienation from the life of God, it must be under the guilt of having withstood all that infinite love and mercy could do to compass your recovery.

3. But there is still another thing implied in this saying of our Lord: it not only tells us of his gracious design in dying on the cross, and of the fitness of that as a means to win and persuade men to come to him; but, further, it tells us of a power going along with that, sufficient absolutely to secure the end in view. The best and holiest design we know may miscarry—the strongest motives and most powerful inducements may fail to attract, because of the inveterate blindness and perversity of the heart to which they are addressed. And, therefore, when Christ says expressly, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," must be regarded as speaking, not merely of an intended and likely, but of an actual result; not simply of means most skilfully fitted to draw, but of the forth-putting of a power in connection with these, which should certainly be productive of the desired effect. He seems to draw a contrast as well between what he himself would do toward men, after he had been lifted up, and what he had been doing before, as between what men themselves felt and did toward him in the one period and the other. Hence he says, not that men shall be drawn, but *I* will draw. "Now

is the time of preparation merely, but then it shall be the time of harvest; now I am in a manner standing by, and doing little, but then I shall begin to work in a different manner; it will be the day of my power, and I shall find for myself a willing people; I shall draw them so, that they shall be constrained to run after me."

Indeed, in the condition in which men naturally are, nothing short of this would suffice, for they are dead to what concerns their peace with God, joined by cords strong as death to their idols of vanity and sin. And while, as rational beings, they must know of its being the design of heaven to recover them, and also be entreated by arguments fitted to move them to fall in with that design, yet there is required, besides, the effectual working of a power upon their hearts, to quicken their souls and bring them into true and proper compliance with the offers of Christ. A soul really drawn to Christ, and united to him in an everlasting covenant, is a kind of new creation, a regenerated being; and nothing can actually produce it but the life-giving energy of that same spirit which at first breathed into man's nostrils, and made him a living soul. The one as well as the other is a workmanship of God—"his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And again, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

But how should this quickening, regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit be connected with the lifting up of Christ on the cross, so that the one should be fitly regarded as the necessary and proper result of the other? On two accounts; and, first, because the gift of the Spirit to repair and build up again the ruined temple of God in man, or to draw souls into living union with Christ, was the great promise of the Father, which Christ received in reward of his finished work, and which, therefore, must wait for its due fulfilment till that work, the work of reconciliation for iniquity, was finished. As it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." With Christ's being lifted up, then, the curse was abolished, and the mighty barrier, which sin had raised between us and heaven was effectually removed; and now, therefore, the healing, reviving waters of the Spirit, loosed in a manner from their confinement, could flow freely out; from that time they were put into the hands of Christ, the accepted and glorified Redeemer, to be shed forth by him on the souls of men for their salvation. Nor is this the only way in which the drawing efficacy of God's regenerating Spirit stands connected with the lifting up of Christ on the cross; for in that also the Spirit finds the grand means or instrument by which he does regenerate and draw. The truth of a crucified Re-

deemer is the weapon which he especially employs to conquer and subdue the sinner's heart; it is by taking of the things which belong to the salvation of the cross that he ever begins and carries on the work of grace in the soul; it was that cross, which brought the outcast family of man within the blessed region of the Spirit's influence, and it is that cross still which he uses as his grand instrument for drawing nigh the far off and sanctifying the unclean.

Well, then, may we say blessed as well as cursed cross! For Christ, indeed, accursed, yet for us most blessed. His work of suffering, obedience, and death, then, has not only laid open for us the way from earth to heaven, but has brought down heaven, I may say, to earth—has brought to our hand the all-sufficient grace of the Divine Spirit to renew our fallen natures, and lift them up into fellowship with our glorious Redeemer. And now, if thou art but in earnest to come, thou mayest rest assured that no difficulty or opposition from without can prevail to hinder thee, for the arm of Omnipotence is here. If thou wilt but go to him, and cry, with the fervour of a longing heart, "Lord Jesus draw me," thou mayest add, with undoubting confidence, "I will run after thee," for his grace is even more than sufficient to break the yoke of Satan from thy neck, and to make thee conqueror over all that is against thee.

Ah, but you would rather, perhaps, have had the matter entirely in your own hands; the thought that a higher power than your own is needed to work in you, that except you are drawn from above you cannot come, may appear to you in any shape as an unwelcome guest. You would have felt more at ease, and been able, with greater confidence, to reckon on a happy issue, if the whole had been at your own command; and you would fain escape from the necessity of being shut up to the will and power of another. What is this but in effect to say, You think better of yourself than of Christ—you are more persuaded of your own desires after salvation than his, and can count more upon your own readiness to go to him, than upon his readiness to give you the Holy Spirit to draw you? Look, I beseech you, to the cross of Calvary, and say whether such a thought be not a lie against the truth. Behold Christ there, in matchless love and compassion, pouring out his life-blood for sinners, while you and all mankind were in the condition of enemies, at once hating him, and heedless of salvation. Had *his* will been as *your* will—had *his* heart been no better than *your* heart—your case had been utterly hopeless; and there is not a redeemed soul but shall have reason to bless God throughout eternity, not only that there has been a Saviour lifted up on the cross, but that there is in the hands of that Saviour a spirit of grace given, through his intercession with the Father, to draw sinners unto him.

4. There is an additional point contained in this declaration of Christ, to which we must, in conclusion, direct our thoughts for a little—the extent of this drawing influence, which was to flow from a Saviour on the cross. He says he would not only draw men, but *all* men, to him. And how, it may be asked, can we reconcile this statement with the fact, seeing that in reality it is no more than a select and chosen number that are drawn to him? This is, indeed, a melancholy fact, which admits of no doubt. Even among those who hear the sound of the Gospel, and live within sight as it were of the Saviour's cross, the persons who truly feel its attractive power are still but a little flock. And Christ himself well foreknew that, for he testified once and again that the chosen should be few in comparison of the called, and that the heirs of his salvation should be not the world at large, but those only whom the Father had given him out of the world. So that, whatever Christ may have meant by his drawing all men, he could never intend to express any thing at variance with the doctrine of election by grace.

We may regard the *all* here, as in many other declarations of Scripture, as meaning not absolutely every individual, but individuals of every kind; as when it is said in Matt. iv. 23, that Christ “healed all sickness and all disease,” properly rendered in our Bibles, “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” Or when it is said by Paul at Athens, that “God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent;” not literally every single man in the world, but all sorts of men, men of every nation, and in every condition of life, not excepting even the most degraded and worthless. Or, again, when the same Apostle says of himself, Acts xxii. 15, that he was appointed Christ's “witness unto all men,” evidently meaning men of all kinds and ranks, Jews and Gentiles, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. So also Christ, who had hitherto confined his ministrations of grace to the Jews, and even among them had laboured with so little success, that he might in truth testify, “I have laboured in vain, I have stretched out my hands all the day to a disobedient and gainsaying people”—looking forward now to his crucifixion, which his enemies thought, when it came, would be the death-blow of his cause, confidently proclaims beforehand the truth, that it should only be the commencement of a new and brighter era in his kingdom; for then the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile would be thrown down, and he would begin to gather within the fold of his church sinners of every name and degree. His declaration in this view of it is precisely similar to what was afterwards expressed by Peter, when he said, “the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

To understand the declaration of our Lord here in this manner, is in perfect harmony with what is meant by such language in all writ-

ings, whether human or divine. And yet it may be understood somewhat differently, and in a way which brings out another and very solemn truth concerning the effect of Christ's work on the cross. We said before, that the drawing here should *mainly*, at least, be considered a friendly one, a drawing with the bands of love; yet it is not necessary to confine it altogether to that. The word used in the original is the same with that elsewhere used of drawing fishes in a net, and even of persecuted men before magistrates; so that we may with perfect propriety suppose our Lord here to have had in view *drawing* in the most extensive sense, with respect to enemies as well as friends, and to have thought of the power he was to acquire over all flesh, though still of course with an especial reference to the exercise of it in the hearts of believers. In this more comprehensive sense, the effect of his being lifted up on the cross was literally to draw all men to him; for, from the moment he died on the cross, all power was given to him in heaven and on earth; he was made head over all things—the Father's anointed king, whom every creature was bound to honour and obey. Whether men will or not, therefore, in one sense they must be drawn to Christ; they are within the limits of his empire, subject to his lordship and controul—allied to him, if not as willing, loving, and devoted subjects, then as vanquished rebels and captives; if not to live and reign with him as fellow-heirs of glory, then to be ruled over and dashed in pieces as with a rod of iron. Ah! it is a hopeless struggle for men to wrestle against Christ—to endeavour to cast from them the cords of dutiful allegiance, with which he seeks to attach them to himself, and to break his bands asunder. The cords of love they may indeed cast from them, the bands of grace they may break, but only to be bound with the iron chains of his irresistible dominion, and dragged at his chariot-wheels of victory. They may kick now against the offers of his salvation, but it must inevitably be to kick against the pricks, wounding to the death their own souls; for now the kingdom is the Lord's; he who died and rose again is the governor among the nations; all are being gathered into his net, the good to be laid up in his treasure-house, the bad to be cast away into outer darkness.

It is possible, we say, for men to act thus toward Christ, and so, not only to frustrate the grace which shines from his cross, but turn it besides into an occasion of evil to themselves, deepening their condemnation, and aggravating their eternal misery. They may refuse to be drawn in love, and thereby render it unspeakably worse for them that they ever had been treated to the offer of a Saviour's love, as it only issues in their being "drawn to death," doomed as miserable outcasts to bear the wrath of God and of the Lamb. True it is, there is a twofold effect in that blood which he shed upon the cross—a blessing and a curse; and it is at man's option now to choose either the one or



the other. "His blood be upon us and upon our children," must in one sense be substantially uttered by all; but oh! in how different a sense, and with how opposite a result! If uttered in faith, and with a heartfelt desire for the blessing, then it is found to be the blood which cleanseth from all sin, and openeth a way of access into the holiest of all. But if uttered in unbelief, carelessness, or sin, it adds unspeakably to the burden of guilt, and is itself greater than all sin besides. Witness, ye blind and infatuated Jews, who first uttered that cry in unbelief, and still have refused to do it in faith, whether it be a light thing thus to despise the blessing, and inherit the curse! How soon did the thunders of divine vengeance burst upon your heads; and though centuries have since rolled over you, yet is the curse never rolled away, but is still seen manifestly written in your peeled, scattered, and afflicted condition!

Oh! that men would but learn wisdom from what has befallen *them*—befallen them, for a sign and a warning to all to whom the offer of the Saviour comes! Remember, I beseech you, that however much it becomes us, ourselves erring and sinful, to make the case of those, who are shutting their hearts against the blessed influence of the cross, the subject of pity and concern, rather than of harsh condemnation and rebuke, it still is one of fearful guilt and danger. They are in the condition of which Christ himself has said, that "there is no cloak for its sin;" it carries, so to speak, the burden of all guilt in its bosom, and is fraught, as nothing else is or can be, with the elements of perdition. O abide not in such a sad and perilous condition, but suffer yourselves to be drawn into the embrace of a Saviour who is for you still merciful, and waiting to be gracious. In his name I again invite you to betroth yourselves to him in marriage-union for ever. I beseech you, by the mercies of the Lord, by the tears, the agonies, the life-blood of Jesus, and by the salvation of your precious immortal souls, not to make light of the gracious offer, but to come near, and lay fast hold of Christ for your everlasting welfare. Shall I take heaven and earth, that timber, and these walls, to witness, that the offer has been fairly made, and the treaty of love faithfully proposed to your acceptance? O let me rather anticipate a happy result, and hope that ye shall be yourselves witnesses on that day, when, with garments washed in the Redeemer's blood, ye stand upon Mount Zion with everlasting joy upon your heads, and when we shall sit down together around the Tree of Life, to feast on its immortal fruits, and drink of the River of Life, which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Lord grant that we may so meet, and that none may be found awanting—none who shall have to be visited with destruction from the presence of the Lord, for having despised the riches of his offered grace.

## SERMON XXX.

GOD'S DWELLING WITH THE HUMBLE AND CONTRITE, THE SOURCE OF THEIR  
REVIVAL.

BY THE REV. M. F. PARKER, BRECHIN.

"Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—ISAIAH lvii. 15.

GOD'S Word is pre-eminently a blessed word. It makes known most gracious views of the divine character, and draws by the most blessed persuasion, the hearts of God's people to find ever increasing interest and delight in the divine ways and perfections. The more that we take our instruction regarding the divine character from the Bible, the more shall we be convinced, that, during our day of grace, God would allure our affections to himself, and would prevail upon us to receive in faith and love the most gracious manifestations of his divine excellencies. The various truths of the text should readily dispose us, when we consider aright, to take such views of the God of Israel, and should impress our thoughts with his infinite grace and tenderness in his spiritual transactions with the souls of his people. When we meditate devoutly on these truths, we may be justly reminded of the declaration of a Prophet, when he speaks of the divine procedure, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."

That saying is attractively illustrated by the condescending representation vouchsafed of God, of our God in Christ, by the Prophet in the text, "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Can there be, possibly, a more engaging manifestation of the grace and condescension of God? Faith should be awakened to hear of such amazing grace in the character and procedure of God. Spiritual interest should be excited to dwell upon this manifestation of the divine perfections. Spiritual affections should be quickened to embrace this blessed representation of the grace of our God in Christ. That which should fill the heart of faith with the most devout and extraordinary admiration is, that he

who inhabiteth eternity in its inconceivable blessedness and glory, that he whose name, whose nature and essence, are holy, has a dwelling place on this earth, in which he peculiarly delights to reside. That dwelling place is with them who are of a contrite and humble spirit; and the purpose of his abode is to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

I. In desiring to obtain spiritual instruction and improvement from the truths of this text, consider first of all the impressive solemnity with which these truths are introduced—"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy."

Such a solemn declaration of the Spirit of God should lead you to hear with reverence and humility, and dispose you to listen to the truth having such an announcement with the deepest interest. He that is addressing unto you truths of such marvellous condescension, is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. There is infinitely more embodied in that declaration, than it is possible for any one adequately to express. He, whose glory is infinite, whose perfections are divine, whose essence is unsullied holiness, is announcing from his abode of unutterable purity and splendour, truths of unsearchable grace and condescension. No created being can approach his glory and excellence. In the simple grandeur of Scriptural expression, it is affirmed, that he is the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." His inconceivable perfections, and excellence, and glory, are represented in the designation, that he is "the high and lofty One." His abode is with unequalled sublimity brought before the believing admiration of the people of the Lord, "He inhabiteth eternity." His immediate dwelling-place, in its undefined immensity, is eternity. The glory and the honour of the heavens encircle Jehovah.

How much of spiritual meaning and significance is revealed to the eye of faith, in that great truth "He inhabiteth eternity." From eternity did God exist, and infinitely happy in his own glory. His being is underived, and never had a beginning; before angel and arch-angel were called into being to celebrate his praises, did our God exist in his own uncreated glory. The blessed spirits of heaven, who, as they receive their existence from the "high and lofty One," derive also their happiness from the infinite happiness which resides in his perfections, and delight to magnify his glory, and to do his will. Their fervid praises ascend to him, who has given them all their powers of serving him, and their capacities of enjoying him. In the immediate dwelling place of God are the souls of the redeemed, who "have passed beyond tribulation, and who, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands," cry with a loud

voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Infinite happiness is in the immediate dwelling-place of him who inhabits eternity; unutterable glory is also around the God of our salvation. The Word of God elevates our faith, and calls upon us to entertain devout and adoring views of the glory of him, who is holy in his nature, and holy and righteous in all his ways. Yet, though thus glorious and exalted, though infinite in his own happiness, though inconceivably pure and holy in his essence, though requiring no services of any created being, that rejoices in the excellence of his will, to add to his internal and infinite happiness and complacency, yet, amazing truth of God's own grace and condescension, he delights to come forth from the glory which he inhabits in eternity, and to dwell with them, who in the depths of humility and self-abasement, feel their own guilt and unworthiness in his holy and omniscient view, and in faith and love acknowledge him as their God in Christ.

What a precious revelation does the Prophet give of the grace of God! What a consolatory representation of his unsearchable condescension! While God dwells in the heavens, and praises of eternity—while he dwells in the "high and holy place"—a heavenly temple—the grandeur, the purity, the glory of which befit the blessed perfections of his nature—yet he dwells also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit—God dwells with such for a blessed and gracious purpose—"to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." In his wisdom and grace, he has devised a glorious plan of salvation, through which he can hold communion with those in whom these spiritual qualities reside.

II. Consider, then, how the holy God *can* dwell with the contrite and the humble.

His dwelling-place is holy; nothing sinful or unholy is there, or can ever find an entrance thither. His nature is infinitely holy; yet through the atonement of Christ, by the inexhaustible merits of that atonement, God is reconciled to them who believe upon it for salvation. Without that atonement, the holy God could not possibly hold any intercourse with them, who had transgressed his laws, and thrown off his righteous authority. His nature is opposed to every approach to whatever is sinful; and, apart from the satisfaction which his righteousness called for, and his law demanded, it was impossible for God, we say it advisedly, to hold communion with them, who had sin with its defilement abiding in their hearts, and sins without number and of manifold aggravation, chargeable on their lives.

Impressed with these truths, you should rejoice to hear of the “new and living way,” which the blood of Jesus hath consecrated. It is the distinguishing excellence of the gospel, that it makes known the reconciliation, which Jesus by his death hath accomplished between God, and them who in faith accept of the offered salvation. In this view it is affirmed by an Apostle, “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was *in* Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” On the grounds of that perfect reconciliation, God can, without compromising his justice or violating his holiness, receive into his favour, and distinguish by his love, them who have broken his laws; but who, under the convincing power of his Spirit, have been brought to experience that they are the chief of sinners. To them who believe in the atonement—who behold that in its purifying blood there is pardon for their sins, and cleansing for their guilt—to them the righteousness of Christ is imputed. His blood hath washed out the sins with which they are chargeable. From them God’s wrath in its fierceness has been turned aside, and with them who have cordially accepted the offered salvation, who have embraced it with a living faith, God, holy as he is in his nature, and dwelling as he does in the high and holy place, beholds not one ground or cause of condemnation. “For he hath made (as it is said by an Apostle) him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Such is the blessed representation which the divine Word gives you of the reconciliation which Jesus hath effected—such are the glad tidings that make known “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” When the evangelical Prophet proclaims the infinite condescension of the holy God in holding communion, from the high places of eternity, with any of the sinful children of men, even when there are dwelling within them the spiritual qualities of contrition of heart and humility of soul—these traces of the Spirit’s operation—these features of the second birth—let us keep it impressively in the view of our faith—that such condescension on the part of God is founded upon the atonement of the Redeemer, and that the communion which God maintains, is with them who cordially rest for every interchange of the divine favour, upon the merits of the atonement.

How precious then is the death of Christ! The believer in its satisfaction can say, *that* death has removed the wrath of God. Holy as his nature is, yet *that* sacrifice of unsearchable grace, and fraught with the incense of redeeming love, has reconciled the perfections of God, and made

it possible for God, dwelling in the holiness and magnificence of his heavenly temple, to maintain an endearing communion with such as are of a contrite and humble spirit.

Let the satisfaction, which Jesus has given to the righteousness and holiness of God, render the divine perfections the more precious in your view; let it raise your love of God to its intensest ardour. When you consider what infinite wrath has been turned aside by the death of Christ—what blessed reconciliation it has accomplished—what love it has called into exercise—surely you should ever delight to admire the blessed results which the Saviour's propitiation has effected. Never should that great subject of the Redeemer's death be heard of by you, but with love, and wonder, and gratitude. Its announcements of grace should be received with the warmest affection, its cheering tidings should be welcomed with emotions of the intensest delight. How blessed that, in consequence of it, God may dwell in gracious presence with the humble and the contrite! It should come upon your hearing as the voice of the richest mercy and grace, when you find *that* God, who is the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, addressing unto you his message of pardon, and reconciliation, and infinite condescension, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

III. The Prophet describes the spiritual affections of them, with whom God "delights to take up his abode—they are of a contrite and humble spirit."

Consider the nearness of God to such as are spoken of by the Prophet of the Lord. God dwells with them. It is true that God is everywhere present, and he is near to every creature which he has formed. There is infinitely more implied than the neighbourhood of omnipresence, in the dwelling which God in Christ maintains, with the contrite and humble in spirit. Wherever they are, or in whatever circumstances, God dwells with the humble and the contrite. God is near them in gracious condescension, while his glory is revealed in "the high and holy place." God dwells with them in his all-wise and beneficent providence. His government is at all times and under all circumstances around them, ordering in the tenderness of redeeming love for the best, arranging for the highest good, whatever befalls the contrite and humble. God dwells within them by the presence of his Spirit. It is that Spirit which has produced the very contrition and humility which dwell in their souls. He is near them with his word—it is the word which was the special means employed by his Spirit, to impart those very qualities

of contrition and humility. It is elsewhere affirmed in the Scriptures, regarding the nearness of God to such as are described by the Prophet, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

God dwells with the humble and the contrite in the way of distinguishing grace and love, He is well pleased with the spiritual affections which reside in their souls. When the Psalmist was deeply imbued with a sense of his sinfulness, yet he was enabled to say, that, with the spiritual grief which was dwelling in his heart, as the spirit of the Lord had produced it, so was it in the view of God an accepted sacrifice." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

In what does this contrite and humble spirit consist, which God peculiarly delights to honour ? These terms denote spiritual qualities—the qualities of a heart upon which the spirit of regeneration has descended, in which he has begun the work of salvation, and in which he is advancing that work to its final and blessed consummation. In the contrite spirit, there is godly sorrow for sin ; there is grief for the evil of sin in the view of a God of infinite holiness and goodness, and for the spiritual distance which sin occasions between God and them who would love him. In the contrite spirit, sin is mourned over, because by sin the holy law of God has been violated. The contrite heart is grieved and weighed down under the burden of sin ; and while it confesses and mourns over the exceeding bitterness of the evil of sin, it sighs for deliverance from its condemnation, for freedom from its power, and for a gracious sense of the forgiveness of God in Christ.

In contrition of heart, the bitterness of sin is peculiarly experienced ; and that which gives the distinguishing characteristic to such sorrowful emotions is, that sin is felt to have been committed against such great goodness and such exceeding love, as the goodness and love of God. The grief for sin, in contrition of heart, is not a temporary emotion, a fleeting change, a momentary sadness, transient as "the morning cloud, and as the early dew." It is an abiding and settled conviction of the evil of sin, in the heart and life. The Holy Spirit has given rise to that conviction of the evil of sin, and has given utterance to its experience in the expression of the Psalmist, "My sin is ever before me." Contrition of heart may or may not be accompanied by outward signs of grief ; it dwells as it often does, when it is only seen by the heart-searching God. The moving element of contrition is not so much the punishment, awful as that is, to which sin exposes, as the goodness which it has offended, the love which it has grieved.

The unbelieving and impenitent have no sympathy with contrition of

heart; they are strangers to its cause, they are unvisited by its melting power.

You will observe that the Prophet also says, that God dwells with him that is of an humble spirit. That spiritual characteristic is an accompaniment of contrition of heart. In an humble spirit, self is abased, God is exalted, Christ's person, offices, and work are honoured. In the humility, with which God dwells in gracious neighbourhood and blessed presence, every sentiment of opposition to God, of enmity to his law, of indifference to his offered salvation, is uprooted. There is no place for any such opposition in the heart, which the spirit of the Lord has humbled and subdued. The humility, of which the Prophet speaks, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who empties the heart of every sentiment of vanity, of pride, of self-sufficiency, and leads the man who is the subject of his power, through the depths of self-abasement into an honoured residence, even to have communion with "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

Why does the Prophet condescend upon these spiritual qualities of contrition and humility? He has a gracious purpose to accomplish. There is consolation for the contrite in heart—there is high distinction for the humble in spirit. When God's Word inflicts a spiritual wound it is for the especial purpose of giving health to the soul. Has that Word discoursed of the holiness of God, of the purity and holiness of the eternity which he inhabits—has that Word made known the evil of sin in the heart—and has the Spirit of God gone along with the Word in impressive manifestation, till the heart is exercised in the deepest contrition—has the Word taught the heart, that humility is of all spiritual qualities the one which should distinguish it the most? The Word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, has by such spiritual treatment, the most gracious purposes to accomplish.

IV. The text directs you to the purpose which God has in dwelling with the contrite and the humble; it is to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

How does God revive the heart of the humble, how does he revive the heart of the contrite ones? For the accomplishment of this gracious design, his Word is the means, his Spirit is the agent, and He, with the means, is all-sufficient.

The very view given of the character and dealings of God in the text, is, by the divine blessing, fitted to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Although infinite in his own glory and happiness—although eternity with its blessedness and magni-



ficence unutterable is his abode, yet God, reconciled in Christ, empties himself of all that glory, and has his abode in the hearts of the humble and contrite. In no worldly pomp or grandeur, in no outward forms or ceremonies, does the God of Israel delight—in no external magnificence—in temples built by human hands, of goodly proportion or imposing splendour, and fascinating for the imagination to survey. The temple in which he delights to dwell is the humble heart, and the contrite spirit. It was the question of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, “Will God indeed dwell in the earth? Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded.”

The Prophet answers this royal question. God does indeed dwell in the earth. He dwells in the heart of the humble and contrite, and for a blessed purpose, even to revive them by his presence. His offers of pardon, his promises of life, will revive them. The blessed prospects of honour and of immortality, which God reveals through Christ Jesus, will reanimate the humble with new spiritual life. Jesus has pronounced a blessing on them, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The blessing of God, bestowed by the Redeemer, and sealed by the Spirit, rests upon them; the favour of God is their portion; and that is infinitely more to be desired than anything else imaginable. Or rather, that is the chief, the only blessing, and without which any other possession is unblessed.

A possession of glory is before them—“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Well may they carry themselves humbly in this present life, when, in the life that is to come, such imperishable riches are their inheritance. Besides, the humble have an example to which they may delight to be conformed. The grace which dwells within them, makes them resemble the meek and lowly Jesus. He left the bosom of the Father, and took upon him the form of a servant, although he thought it no robbery to be equal with God. To have the same mind which dwelt in Jesus, dwelling in the humble—such spiritual resemblance to the brightness of the Father’s glory, should be a source of revival to their souls. The good spirit of God is also promised to dwell within them; and he, by his gracious counsel and presence, will lead through the valley of humiliation, and conduct the spiritual child of his guidance, by the right hand, to the heavenly Canaan. In that view, it is the prayer of the Psalmist, breathed from the depths of his humbled and chastened soul, “Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God; thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”

God, who revives the spirit of the humble, also revives the heart of the contrite ones. God dwells within them by his spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who has awakened within them their godly sorrow; and the same

blessed spirit who softened and subdued the heart, and revealed impressively its sinfulness, will lead to the sacrificed Lamb of God, by whose blood of sprinkling, the stains and guilt of sin are washed away. Ye contrite in heart, ye that sorrow after a godly sort, ye that are grieved in your souls for the bitterness of sin, hear the word of life, and turn your faith to the atonement of Jesus. The word of life, with its assurances of pardon and its offers of salvation, is given to revive your souls; the Spirit of the Lord dwells in that word, and calls upon you with an earnestness which allows of no refusal, to "Behold the lamb of God." Have you sinned against the law of God, and do you feel that it passes upon you its sentence of righteous condemnation? Jesus by his sufferings and death has magnified the law; in your place he has answered every claim, which the law in its righteousness can ever urge. Have you sinned against infinite love? How inexhaustible is the love which has bestowed the gift of Christ's perfect and imputed righteousness. Receive that gift in love; it calls for love in return.

God dwells with the contrite in heart, to revive them by the influences of his Spirit. The Spirit is promised in answer to prayer. Jesus our High Priest is interceding in the immediate dwelling-place of the "high and lofty One," to send the Comforter as a Spirit of life, and light, and consolation. In the aids of the Spirit to heal your spiritual wounds, behold a fulfilment of the truth, that the Lord dwells with the contrite in heart, to revive them. In the pardon of sin, of the sins of your heart and life, the sins which give the bitterness to your contrition; in the sealed pardon of these sins, presented by your God in Christ, and in the experience of a sweet and gracious sense of the Divine forgiveness, behold how the Lord revives the heart of the contrite ones. His promise is pledged to your revival; and the heavens and the earth will depart, but the promise of your God will not fail.

How precious should be the promise, that the Lord will dwell with you, for the purpose of reviving your souls in that blessed assurance of your God. Behold the harbinger of a spring-time of spiritual life, which will advance ever onwards within you, till you reap in abundance and with rejoicing, the fruits of immortality. A prospect so blessed should cheer you in your way, uphold you by its hopes, and comfort you with its liveliness. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The compassionate Jesus bends over your lowliness of spirit, and he will raise you up to enjoy with himself an honoured fellowship in the glory hereafter to be revealed. The compassionate Jesus sympathises with your spiritual grief, and invites you to behold the abundance and the freeness

of his love, and the sureness of your forgiveness in the sufferings which he, "a man of sorrows," endured to perfect your redemption. He has pronounced the mourner in Zion to be blessed, and promised consolations, which are sure as his love, and unfailing as his intercession.

How, then, brethren, will you the most improve these truths of God's blessed Word? They are so gracious—they are so fraught with divine condescension—you must feel, and confess, that you are spiritually unworthy of them. God, who is infinite in his essential glory and happiness, who inhabits the high praises and blessedness of eternity, yet delights to dwell with the humble and contrite in heart. These truths, under the divine blessing, should deepen your humility, and exercise your souls with a godly sorrow for the evil of sin. These truths should lead to prayer for the indwelling of a lowly spirit; they should dispose your hearts to long after a more plentiful experience of that contrition of soul, which God delights to honour by his presence. The supplication should arise from your souls, Increase the humility which God will exact; increase the contrition of heart which God will revive by infusing a sense of his pardoning grace.

The truths of this text also, received in faith and welcomed with gladness, should teach you how high is the honour of them whom God delights to honour. They should conduct the humble and the contrite to an inexhaustible fountain of consolation. God is at present dwelling with them to revive their souls, and the life which his presence imparts will never die, but will flourish with God himself in the "high and holy place" through endless ages, when humility is exalted to unfading honour, and contrition of heart is changed into the intensity of heavenly joy.

And you ought not to suffer these truths to pass away from your thoughts, without being seriously impressed with the situation of those who are destitute of the spiritual qualities which the Word of God describes—with the situation of those who know not the humility which God approves, and who are unvisited by the contrition of heart which God vouchsafes to honour with his presence. Oh! may God visit such with the convincing power of his Spirit, and subdue them into spiritual obedience by the teaching of his Word. The Word in its faithfulness and mercy has a message addressed to their situation—"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." May, then, none of you despise the grace and condescension of our God in Christ; may his gracious procedure with the humble and the contrite, dispose every heart to desire after ever increasing attainments in their spiritual qualities and affections, which God, in the unsearchable depths of his grace, delights to revive by his presence.

Let this then be made a matter of self-examination by every one of you. Let each one ask, have I realised that condition of mind, in which I may expect that the high and holy one will dwell with me and revive me? Have I ever really experienced that contrition and humility of soul which arises from the exhibition, by the Holy Spirit, to my own consciousness, of the utter vileness of sin, and my own vileness as a sinner? Have I been taught to abhor myself—to loath sin, and myself as a sinner? Have I mourned over it, not only because its wages are death, and from fear of the wrath to come, but as offensive to the holiness of God, and a violation of all that gratitude and love should oblige me to perform? Have I been humbled under a sense of my unworthiness, so that I could take up the language of Scripture and say, “I am a worm, and no man.”

If any of you have had such experience, keep these feelings in lively exercise. It is thus alone that you will secure the richest and most precious manifestations of the Divine goodness. Remember what has been said, that the habitation of God is holy, and consequently that he can only dwell with you when you are in Christ—washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness. Now, in order to your consciousness of the ever-abiding presence of God, it is necessary that you should always exercise a lively faith in Christ. There can be no gracious sense of the Divine presence, and no experience of the love of God in the soul, which does not know and feel its relationship to Christ. And observe how this twofold work is carried on—the revival of the soul, and the increase of the graces of contrition and humility. The believer who is running his course, looking unto Jesus, realizes the condition described by the prophet, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn and be in bitterness, as one mourneth for a first-born, and is in bitterness for an only child.” It is impossible to be continually exercising faith in Jesus—contemplating what he was and what he became—knowing wherefore “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” without becoming both contrite and humble. Pride and self-righteousness cease to exist in the believing view of a crucified Saviour, and he who is determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified, has the best assurance that he shall be always contrite and humble. On the other hand, faith is the instrument which lays hold of all the merit and fulness of Christ, appropriates them and makes them our own. By thus acting faith in Christ, then, all that is his becomes ours, and the love of the Father can flow forth towards us unrestrained. Where can He who inhabits the high and holy place find an abode more befitting the perfect purity of his own nature, and where He may more fully display the riches of his glory, and the depths of his

boundless love, than in a soul possessed, by free gift, of all the righteousness and matchless graces of his own beloved Son in whom He is ever well pleased.

But are there any here who have never felt contrition? It is to be feared that there are too many such in every congregation. To them, we must needs say, You are far from God. You have never known—never seen Jesus—never beheld the Lamb of God—and consequently God cannot, without denying his own holiness, dwell with you, or be any thing else to you than a consuming fire. You cannot look to Jesus without being contrite and humble, and whatever you may profess, you have never looked to him with the eye of faith. You have, therefore, nothing about you acceptable to God. Your own righteousness is as filthy rags. But even for you there is hope. The invitation is to you as to all, Behold the Lamb of God. Complying with this invitation you will be penetrated with sorrow because of sin, and God, even the Holy One, will fulfil in you the promise, “I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

SERMON XXXI<sup>d</sup>

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

BY THE REV. DUNCAN MACFARLAN, D.D., RENFREW.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."—DANIEL ii. 31—35.

THE general condition of the Church, in reference to the world, urges to the consideration of large and fundamental principles. Some of these are set forth with great clearness in the above passage. There is in the prophetic image a very exact picture of the condition of the world in a Pagan state, and, to some extent, of what it is in every state, short of moral perfectness; and there is, in the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, an equally exact picture of the Christian Church working out the renovation of the world. The principles set forth in these two prophetic delineations are important, and ought to be understood at all times. But they are at present to be seen in active operation, and the knowledge of them may essentially contribute to a right view of public duty. It was mainly with a view to this practical end that the attention of the writer was first drawn to this subject, and it is with the same view that he would submit the result of his inquiries to others. May God, in whose hands is the control of every event, also direct and guide all who are truly his.

I. *The Image*.—Suppose, then, that we first think of what is here said concerning the image. We are not left to conjecture the meaning, either of the whole or of its separate parts (v. 36—43). The head of gold meant the Babylonish empire, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 37, 38). The breast and arms, which were of silver, are understood to mean the Medo-Persian empire (v. 39); the belly and thighs of brass, the Grecian, particularly under Alexander the Great (v. 39); and the legs and feet, these last being divided into ten toes, the Roman, in the different conditions of an empire and of the ten kingdoms into which it was after-

wards divided (v. 40-43); all of this is commonly understood, and so generally allowed, as to warrant our omitting any special or detailed proof.

It will also be observed, that these different empires are introduced as occurring *in succession*, and as bringing before us the condition of the world continuously, during a very long period—during a period so long as to extend from the time of Daniel onward to a time yet future, even till the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and this remark is the more important when we bear in mind, that the different empires here described were in their turn supreme, having power over the other nations of the world. Even now; when the last of these is seen broken up into so many separate nations, the chief power still resides among them. The nations of Europe are still substantially supreme among the other nations, and even empires of the world; and, bearing all this in mind, the vision will be understood as setting forth the condition, not of some particular nation or series of nations, but of the world—of the world especially in its Pagan state—but beyond this, to some extent, in all its stages of Christianization, up to that point at which it will become, and henceforward be, not under the dominion of Satan, but consisting of the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

But there remaineth another characteristic of this vision. The object revealed is an *image*. The word translated image is indeed something employed to signify merely a figure or resemblance of something. But its more ordinary meaning, and that which the circumstances seem to require, is that of an *idol*. The object introduced is in the form of a man, the materials employed are like those of idols, and the greatness and strange mixture of the figure do also correspond.

But the nations of the world, and especially those introduced, must in this way somehow or other be *idolatrous*: and the idolatry will require to be such as may be reached, as will afterwards appear, by the progress of Christianity.

Thus far we are carried by the image itself; and now we are led to look around, and to ask, whether the kingdoms of this world be really such as is here supposed;—whether all Pagan nations are essentially idolatrous, and whether all others not yet perfect are in the sight of God chargeable with less or more of the same offence? The question is an important one, altogether apart from the interpretation of this or any other individual passage. And if it shall turn out that the answer is as the image, the inquiry may lead to important practical results.

1. Now, first of all, it will be recollected that the same corruption which exists in the individual, affects society. Speaking of man as an individual, sin was first introduced into his heart; but out of the heart

proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c., and thus the whole man becomes defiled. Then families made up of such individuals must also be impure ; and this not merely as regards the conduct of particular members, but as respects domestic habits, and the authority of those who are heads of families. The whole economy of such families will be essentially corrupt. But families grow into tribes, and tribes have laws and lawgivers exercising authority over them. And now, if no change has taken place, these very laws, that very authority and public opinion in the tribe, will all of them be sinful and upholding sin. They will not only be so as in a family, but greatly more because of the greater prevalence of moral contagion, and the more commanding influence of social power. But again, tribes become nations, and nations, whether by conquest or federal union, become empires ; and in this state the evil is still worse. The contagion is greater, and the laws and customs, if supported by public opinion, are almost irresistible ; and what now would the world itself be, if left to its own corruption, but one common though varied mass of moral evil.

2. The reasoning employed in these remarks is fully borne out by facts. The sin originally introduced into the breasts of our first parents soon discovered itself in their offspring ; Cain slew Abel, and because his own works were evil and his brother's good. In the course of a few generations the Church had to be separated from the world on account of the prevalence of iniquity. And in the days of Noah, the world had so gained on the Church as to leave but him and his family as the depositories of truth ; all the rest of the human race having sunk into a state of the grossest corruption. The same thing again occurred after the flood. It occurred to such an extent, that in the days of Abraham, who was only the tenth from Noah, special provision had again to be made for the preservation of religious truth. Abraham was separated from his country and kindred that he might be the founder of a separate nation, among whom the true worship and laws of God were to be observed, and all the rest of the world lapsed fast into idolatry, and into a state grossly immoral. And we have, if possible, a still stronger proof in the description furnished by an Apostle, as applicable to the world at the fulness of time. This account contains an explanation also of the corrupting principles. The process is described as consisting, first in self-love and vain glory ; and these, as leading to wrong apprehensions of God, to practices of idolatry (Rom. i. 21-23), and to grossly immoral indulgences (24-27) ; and, speaking more generally, it is said to have consisted in many not liking to retain God in their knowledge, and this, as causing them to be given up to a reprobate mind, so as rankly and habitually to indulge in every form of abomination (28-32). And it



may now be added, that we know of no better description of the state of the Pagan world still. In different countries there are different forms of superstition, different kinds of prevailing indulgences, and laws, and customs having different tendencies; but in all, the corruption of the human heart is seen festering in society, and pervading all its arrangements. It is not merely that there is the oozing forth of the corruption of the heart, and this as defiling all things, but that all the influence of power, all the authority of laws, and strong current of public opinion, are wholly impure, unrighteous, and irreligious. All this may be proved and illustrated from the writings of missionaries employed in Pagan nations. And stronger proofs than any which have been published might be adduced; proofs so strong and so loaded with the unseemly practices of heathen immorality, as to be unfit for general reading.

There will scarcely be any doubt on this subject in the minds of persons conversant with the facts referred to; but even others may very easily satisfy themselves; for what are the laws and customs of any people, when left to their own guidance, but an expression of their opinions and feelings, and these must be as the people themselves. And what, in like manner, are the sympathies of such a people, but sympathies in favour of corruption, of immoral indulgences, and unrighteous laws.

3. But there is another view of this subject, necessary to the filling up of our prophetic delineation. We understand the image to be representative of idolatry, and in correspondence with this, we believe the world, in its unbelieving state, to be essentially idolatrous.

There is a sense in which this will be understood and generally admitted. It will be generally admitted that Pagan nations are for the most part idolaters. We are not sure that this is in the sense understood so general, as many allege; but in another and more abstract form, it is altogether universal. The common saying is, that there is no nation which does not worship some God, and then it follows, that all who do not worship the true God, worship idols. This is not true in point of fact. There are nations that have no idols, and no object properly of worship, and no proper form of worship. Such, for example, are many if not most of the African tribes, and of the Aborigines of New South Wales; and there are unbelievers of a much higher order of intellect who fall in this respect under the same class, such as the Confucians in China. But the truth is, the allegation proceeds upon a wrong theory. It supposes that religion is an essential principle of human nature, and that it must on this account be found in all. There is no doubt that a *capacity for religion* is common to men of all nations, but religion itself is a matter of revelation as to its statements, and of communication

as to its power. The true history of man's condition religiously is this: Religion is of God—is communicated by his Spirit to the individual inwardly; and to the world by the revelation of his will outwardly. It is itself pure in either way; But on coming into contact with the corruption of the human heart, and of a world lying in sin, it becomes impure, and if left alone would grow into corruption itself. Confining our illustration to the world collectively, the history of nations has only to be read that it may be seen. Noah and his family, to go no farther back, knew only the true God and that form of worship which he had appointed; yet, in the days of Abraham, men very generally worshipped other gods, and in the fulness of time, the whole world, with the exception of the Jewish nation, was given up to idolatry, and immoral practices associated therewith. And, in our own times, a competent enquirer would be quite able to show that all the forms of idolatry now existing, are mere corruptions of an earlier and purer faith. Generally speaking, Fetisch worshippers have still impressed on the mere fragments of religious truth which remain among them, traces of an early and patriarchal faith. And other classes more complex and varied, such as the Brahmanists and others, are equally marked with the metaphysics of certain early schools, through which the faith of still earlier times had to pass.

But this very tendency to corrupt, tends also to an ultimate annihilation of religion itself. The same alienation of mind from God, which veils in forms adapted to the human heart, leads to an utter forgetfulness of God, and distaste for every thing proper to his worship. And hence it is, that among many of the Aboriginal tribes, whether of Africa or New South Wales, their sacrifices are *feasts*, their priests are *witch doctors*, and they have really no form of observance which can be called *worship*. And the very same thing happens in nations intellectually refined. The superstitions of the vulgar are first exposed, then ridiculed, and ultimately laid aside, leaving nothing behind but the varying theories of philosophers. Even ancient Greece and Rome had almost reached this very condition, when Christianity stepped in and saved these nations from absolute infidelity.

The subject itself is interesting, and would, if pursued, lead us too far. But there is one other fact connected with it which we may not pass over. It is, that the cause why a form of religion remains in many cases so long, nevertheless of an entire absence of all religious principle and feeling, seems to be, that in such cases it has become associated with other interests and indulgences, altogether corrupt, and, therefore, not subject to decay. It is in this way that the idolatrous forms of India, for example, retain their hold on the public mind. The

meetings called religious festivals are occasions of very gross indulgences, and they are also instruments in the hands of parties having power of consolidating their authority. And this may be said generally of all false religions, *really popular*, really having a hold on the minds of the people. They are either instruments of political power, or sources of immoral indulgences, or, as is generally the case, both. And it is through these, more than any thing, that Satan's reign is made strong. It is not that he simply acts against the authority and worship of God, but that, by corrupting the latter, religion becomes a cloak to sin, and even legalizes and promotes it.

It will be observed, that in all this, we have spoken only of Paganism, but the same principle extends to corruptions of every form. The very same tendency of our corrupt nature, which converted the simple faith of the Patriarchs into Paganism, changed the doctrines and worship of the Apostles and first Christians into Mahommedanism, Popery, and other forms of error less generally known. And these, like their congeners of a Pagan faith, have either admitted into their observance the traffic and sinful indulgences of the world, so as to secure their hold on the minds of the people, or they have degenerated into a mere name, leaving the more intelligent little else than infidels.

In *these respects, therefore*, all, or nearly all, will admit that the nations of the world are for the most part *idolaters*. Our principle enables us to pronounce them *all idolaters*; not indeed in form, but in substance—in respect of their alienation from God and corruption of his worship—the very absence of images and of worship being itself a proof how far the process of corruption has been carried.

But there is another sense in which the nations of the world are fitly represented by the prophetic image; and although this is certainly the more abstract, it is nevertheless that which seems mainly intended. The head of gold directly pictured the King of Babylon, and the glory of his reign (see verses 37–38), not the priests of Bel, or any thing proper to the idolatry of Babylon; and so was it of the other parts of the image (verses 39–43.) These were like the head, all severally descriptive of the nations they represented *politically*. And politically, therefore, must these nations be held as idolatrous. The principle arrived at in the other case will assist us. Idolatry is the giving of that honour and glory to any other, which is due only to God. And so, when the flatterers of Herod shouted, “It is the voice of a god and not of a man, immediately the angel of the Lord smote him *because he gave not God the glory*!” (Acts xii. 22–23.) And this was the very sin of the King of Babylon, and no doubt that which rendered the head of gold a part of the image. (See verses 28–30 and 34–37.) And this is the master sin, first of the

human heart, then of each family, and lastly of kingdoms and empires, including their laws and customs, and whatever else may direct or control society.

And curious enough it is, that here also the corrupting tendency diverges into two separate currents, the one ending in an entire absence of every thing like an acknowledgment of God, and the other in the embodying of interested and corrupt ends under the cover of divine authority. The latter, as in forms of worship, is greatly more common than the other. Most nations embody their faith in their constitution, and some even allege the authority of the State to be divine; nevertheless that it is in all its leading features opposed to the will of God, and essentially an organized form of oppression, and thus instrumental in promoting rather than in restraining wickedness. This alliance nevertheless gives stability to such governments, and, on the principle already referred to, namely, that the ends so served are natural to man, and are sought by him. And the analogy holds equally good in the other branch, for what is a government, simply expressive of a nation's will, and without any acknowledgment of God, or any observance of his laws, but infidel? "The powers that be," it is said, "are ordained of God." This undoubted passage of Scripture is freely quoted in support of governments such as we have described; but it will not surely be maintained, that these "are ordained of God" for the purpose of governing *independently of God*, for the purpose of denying his moral government and enforcing laws in the very face of his express commands. Such a theory will not bear examination on general grounds, and far less can it stand with the express word of revelation. (See Romans xiii. 4, 2 Samuel xxiii. 3-4.)

Now, both of these tendencies, it will be observed, manifest themselves in Christian as well as Pagan nations. They are the concomitants of moral corruption, the one generally in circumstances of popular ignorance and superstition, and the other in nations distinguished for intellectual attainments, or at least activity, with a less amount of practical religion.

The rapid survey which we have thus taken of what may be called political idolatry, is perhaps enough to shew the truth of the principle proceeded upon, and more than this would lead us too far; and there is only one other element in this condition of the world which we shall stop to notice. It is the well ascertained fact, that no nation has the power of reforming itself. No barbarous nation, for example, has ever been known to become civilized except through the interference of some other nation already in that state. We rather think that, provided we had the means of fully testing the question, it would further be found

that all intellectual improvement originates with religion—with revealed truth. This at least may be proved, that the introduction of religion to any nation is ever followed by intellectual improvement. And it is all but proved, that nothing but religion will so humanize the mind of any nation as to give it a taste for general knowledge. And so far as the lights of history guide us, we are farther induced to believe that the early improvement even of heathen nations, such as that of Greece, was brought about by the importation of knowledge from countries which had not yet wholly lost an acquaintance with Divine truth. And proceeding even upon such grounds as these, the world is thus brought before us, as not only of itself universally idolatrous, but also as essentially and permanently so. The prophetic image was thus literally descriptive of the condition of the world. The head was of gold, and it passed downwards into silver, and brass, and iron mixed with clay; but still it was a piece of dead matter, undergoing indeed changes, but these were all downward. They were as nations themselves, still becoming more and more debased, and yet, in no stage of this progress, discovering aught of a redeeming tendency.

This, be it observed, is the character under which all nations, unblessed with the Gospel, are to be seen, and in so far as any nation is wanting in moral and religious influence, it is under the same taint, and is subject to the same progress. This, therefore, is the aspect under which the world ought to be contemplated, apart from the effects of Gospel truths, or short of their full and transforming power. And it is the more necessary that this be observed, in consequence of the claims of mere intellectualists, who, counting on the effect of means employed in Christian society, argue as if these were of themselves the sole causes, and very much as men who have never been out of their own country, and who know little of any other, persuade themselves that the husbandry of this country would succeed equally well every where else. They do not know what it is to want the advantages of soil and climate which we enjoy, and neither do many of our intellectual theorists know what it is to want the influences of Christianity.

II. *The stone cut out of the mountain without hands.*—The cutting of this stone out of the mountain was not coeval with the commencement of the succession of kingdoms set forth in the image. “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out,” which is explained in the 44th verse thus—“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” Then, as to the execution of the threatening, that this stone should smite the image, it is said in the vision, “which smote the image upon his feet,” that is, during the continuance of the *Roman*

empire; and yet, in doing this, it is added, that not only the iron and clay, but also "the brass, the silver, and the gold," were to be broken to pieces together. This leads us at once to the time of the cutting out of the stone. It was to be looked forward to during the times of the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, and the Grecian Empires; but it was to occur under the Roman. And how is it then possible for any one to doubt as regards the fulfilment? The explanatory description is, "*In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*" And what kingdom can this be, if it be not that kingdom which was announced by John, as in his days "at hand;" and by the Saviour, first as at hand, and afterwards as already come; and by the Apostles, as fully revealed. It could only be, what it no doubt was, the Christian Church.

The figure introduced is in many respects fitted to bring before us the leading characteristics of the Church as regards the world.

1. And first, as to its origin. Quarries were of old frequently in mountains, and there is nothing perhaps in this, beyond a proper keeping with the imagery employed; but its being cut out of the mountain *without hands*, was no doubt intended to point at the divine origin of Christianity, and this as distinguishing it from every other form of religion. It was literally of God. Its foundation stone was his own incarnate Son—its first propagators were his inspired Apostles—the first Christian Church was born under the special power of Pentecostal influence—all genuine members of the church universal, are born not only of water, but of the Spirit, and the great rule of church order and moral obedience is the Word of God. Such an institution is eminently of God, and must, from its very nature, endure for ever.

2. Another of its characteristics is set forth in the power of the stone to break the image. We all know that among the rude implements of ancient times, employed in breaking any piece of carved work, a mass of stone was the most natural, and that which was most frequently used. Now, be it remembered, that the prophetic image has been explained as meaning not the abstract constitution and power of nations, but their idolatrous character—and this, whether it respects the moral condition of their superstitious and polluted worship, or their self-willed and unrighteous, if not also impious, governments. The thing to be broken, therefore, and reduced to powder, *is not the ordinance of government*, which is of God, *but the idolatry of nations*, which is wholly of man. And now, it will be seen, that Christianity, as taught by the Apostles, *was* eminently fitted to effect this—was so fitted as simply by its progress to carry out all that is here meant. Suppose, for example, even now, that the Gospel were sent to some nation previously in a state of

heathen darkness: it would first reach only individuals—one here and another there would be found to experience the power of the truth. For a time this work might go on undisturbed; curiosity and other causes might even gather around the preacher crowded and attentive audiences. But allow conscience to be once awakened—let the individual once feel himself restrained from wonted habits, and compelled to unwonted causes of conduct—and even he will be brought into collision with his fellow men. His own family will take offence, and his neighbours will eye him askance, and by and bye an arm of power will be lifted up against him. But allow the one to become a thousand, and the thousand to become many thousands, and now the cry will be raised of “turning the world upside down.” It will now become a matter of necessity, either that such parties shall be freed from sinful laws and customs, or that they shall be put down by the hand of power. And thus begun, the contest will go on till the one or the other prevail—either till truth be overcome, or till after, it may be, many trials, it prevail; leaving, indeed, laws and customs and religion behind, yet not after the manner of an image.

What reason would thus pourtray, history narrates. The day of Pentecost was but as yesterday, when the doctrines of Peter and John gave offence, and they were called before the Jewish Sanhedrim; and taught as they had been by the Master himself to “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” they were nevertheless compelled to say to the High Priest and his Council, “whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts iv. 19, 20); and on another occasion, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts v. 29); and it was but a little longer when Stephen was put to death under the charge of teaching things contrary to the established order (Acts vi. 13, 16); and, as it was among the Jews, so was it with the Gentiles, Paul and his companions were persecuted at Philippi for teaching customs contrary to the Roman laws (Acts xvi. 20, 21); and at Thessalonica for teaching “contrary to the decrees of Cæsar” (xvii. 7); and they were mobbed at Ephesus for disturbing the adoration of the goddess Diana (xix. 23–34); and these are only specimens of what continued to be the experience of all the first teachers of Christianity. We have not in this said any thing of the persecution of private individuals. But the book of Acts and the Epistles sufficiently attest their sufferings, and a still fuller and admirable line of proof will be found in the early apologies of the Church. These describe to us the many and often recurring matters of collision, and the cruel sufferings, as well as gross misrepresentations to which the early Christians were all along subjected;

and as these respect the Roman empire, it is interesting, as well as strictly relevant, to observe, how nevertheless of these, Christianity grew, till in the camp and the court, and generally throughout the empire, it had obtained all but a commanding influence. And still more in point is it to observe, how the Paganism of that great empire, whether as regarded its forms of worship, its immoral and cruel practices, or its irreligious government, was broken down before this stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Not all at once, not by the authority of Constantine alone, nor by any one set of means, but by means and influences flowing from Christianity, or connected therewith, were the feet of the image broken to pieces.

This of itself affords proof as well as illustration ; but the instructions of the Saviour, originally given to his Apostles, are more direct and certain. "Behold," said he, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, and for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. x. 16-18, 34-36.) Nothing can more clearly shew that the Church was to be brought into collision with the idolatry of the world, and that it was in the first place to suffer. The serpent was first to bite the heel of the spiritual seed of the woman—to injure them as regarded the lower part—their worldly condition and bodily estate, but they were in the end, and through these very sufferings, to bruise his head—to destroy his power—his power spiritually—his power as the God of this world, and as represented in the image.

3. It may, however, be well to rest here for a little, so as to look at what is said of this smiting of the image even on the feet, that the whole image was thereby reduced to powder. In this we have just another proof of the principle on which we are proceeding. Suppose mere idolatry, as known under some particular form, to be meant by the image, then would the stone require to have been applied to the head of gold, as well as to the feet of iron and clay. But if the idolatry meant, be as we have been alleging, that alienation from God, and substitution of the corrupt will of the creature for the unerring will of the Creator, then will the idolatry brought before us be one as the prophetic image, no matter that the head and the other parts are of diverse materials. It will be thus seen that the kingdom of Satan is one, though of many suc-



cessive ages, and that it remained in power down to the time of the first planting of Christianity; down at least to the time when the first mission was sent forth, and on the accomplishing of which, our Lord himself declared that he saw Satan falling as lightning from heaven.

And it conveys to us this farther idea, which is of some practical importance, namely, that whatever remains of national alienation from God, is in reality a part of the kingdom of Satan, and such as ought to be kept under the power of the stone. There is connected with this a very common and even prevalent mistake. We mean the notion that if Christianity be tolerated, and, still more, if it be supported, all is gained socially that can well be expected; and that beyond these all warrantable progress must be in the power of the truth *over individuals*. Nothing can be more mistaken, and on the principle just referred to, the image may be no longer of the same full and distinct form, but whatever remains of it is essentially idolatrous. It is a part of the kingdom of the wicked one. Israel on the same principle, or rather in virtue of a similar indulgence, allowed the residue of the Canaanites to remain among them, when their strength had been broken, and they suffered for it. It proved to be their snare, and so, no doubt, has it proved with the Church. When she had endured till her enemies had lost their power, and it may be till the sceptre fell substantially into her own hands, she allowed the remainder of Satan's kingdom to remain in peace. And what would you more? it will be said. Would you have her to do as she had been dealt by? Would you have her to persecute? By no means. And what would you then? Simply to carry forward the work in which she had been engaged, with all the advantages of her acquired power; not to rest, but to carry forward the work of Christ as regards Scriptural instruction, till, by the blessing of God, the remaining outfield be as the vineyard of the Lord; and not to rest as regards laws, and customs, and authority, till these be severally based on the Word, and imbued by a spirit of piety.

4. But this carries us forward to another and most important branch of this subject: we mean the stone becoming the mountain, and filling the whole earth. It is altogether too large to be received merely as one characteristic; and, therefore, we shall speak of it in parts. It will be observed, then, from the vision, that the pounding of the image and the enlargement of the stone, so as to become a mountain and to fill the earth, were not strictly consecutive, that is, the stone did not first become a mountain filling the earth, and then smote the image, neither that the stone first broke to pieces the image, and that when this was quite done, it became a mountain, for the co-existence of the stone and the image for some considerable time, is clearly implied—verse 44.

The thing meant was, that the stone when first cut out of the mountain, and when still portable, was employed in pounding the image, and that as this went on, so it grew, till by a diminution of the image and an enlargement of the stone, the one took the place of the other. The one disappeared and the other became a mountain, filling the whole earth. And this we have in part seen. As Christianity grew, Paganism and Pagan rule decayed, and nominally at least, Christianity is even now seen as some lofty mountain towering over all human institutions, and as it grows applying its weight—its influence—to the demolition of another and another position of the fabric of Paganism. And, were the same work going on in pounding to pieces, so as to let the wind blow away the dust of the remaining fragments, in countries called Christian, our prospect of the final accomplishment would be good and inviting. Yet, sure we are, that all this will be done, “for the earth shall yet be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Hab. ii. 14.

There is a cause at work in this, which we are apt to overlook, we mean the correspondence between intensity of religion at home, and zeal for the extension of religion abroad. The nations of Europe were as remiss respecting the conversion of the heathen, as they were concerning the purifying power of the gospel at home, and the same cause accounted for both—the want of divine power. The attention of the Christian world has been to some extent engaged with foreign missions, and these have in our own country grown up into national importance; and it is altogether a relevant proof of zeal for the one leading to care for the other, that during the last forty years, certain great questions of righteousness and morality have very strongly laid hold of the public mind. The question of Colonial slavery, and other less prominent, but more decisive of principles, might be cited. And, guided by these indications of an operative principle, we are permitted, even on the score of appearances, to look forward to a condition of the world more in accordance with the delineations of prophecy picturing millennial glory.

5. But we ought not, perhaps, to conclude this series of remarks without adverting to an interpretation of this and similar passages, which has, in different ages, been the cause of great social mischief, and which ought to be guarded against. When the Reformation in Germany had well-nigh reached a state of general diffusion, there broke out among the half-instructed people an opinion leading to revolution and bloodshed. Galled with the continuance of political grievances, they sought to obtain deliverance under the influence of religious motives. They fancied themselves entitled to revolutionise states and overturn governments, for the purpose of erecting in their room others

more in accordance with what they believed to be the will of God. And the effect was, first a civil war, and afterwards the destruction of the parties engaged, and last of all the hindrance of religion, as regarded its progress and also its legitimate influence. Then, during the reign of Cromwell in England, a sect or party was found, called "Fifth monarchy men." They also proposed to overturn existing governments, and to set up in their room the kingdom of the Messiah, as spoken of by Daniel. But their end was as that of the others. What they did was injurious to society, was destructive to themselves, and it was also a hindrance to religion.

On these accounts it may be well very distinctly to guard whatever is said on a subject of this kind. This is due to society—it is due to as many as would be instructed and act on their belief; but it is due also to religion. And it is a matter of satisfaction that this may be done simply by pointing back to the doctrine of the vision. It is not, then, be it remarked, that the Church is to interfere with the affairs of the State, and far less that Church members are to draw the sword, and thus forcibly to alter the laws and constitution of kingdoms. The Church is spiritual, and it is to carry on its pounding process only by spiritual means. It is to shed abroad the light of the Gospel on society, and thus to dispose the nation to righteous laws and right government. It is also to preserve its own purity and power, so as to be able to act as a witness for God, and, thus prepared, it is to give forth no uncertain sound in matters which concern society; and it is, beyond this, to employ all legitimate means for exposing and removing all abuse of whatever kind. In these respects, the Church is to act collectively as well as individually, and thus to bring her influence to bear on every point of the image, and by all the various means competent.

III. *Certain practical questions falling to be determined under the above principles, and especially as regards different views of a Church and State connection.*

On this subject there are various and conflicting opinions.

1. One of these is opposed to all connection between Church and State; and this opinion is commonly defended on two separate grounds. First, it is alleged that because religion is a thing altogether personal, lying exclusively between a man and his Maker, therefore its support ought to depend on the voluntary contributions of professors. And secondly, it is argued that the State is properly little else than a national arbiter of party interests in things civil, and that it has absolutely nothing to do with religion. The latter of these is the more fundamental; and our objection to it is, that, so far as we can see, a

nation acting on this principle must continue to be in all time coming essentially infidel. Its people may, independently of this, be all of them professing members of the Church of Christ. But the nation itself, and in its corporate capacity, cannot, as we think, be other than unbelieving—making no profession of the faith of the gospel. And then we are at a loss to see how, in these circumstances, “the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;” how “kings are to be nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers,” of the Church; and still more, how, in accordance with this theory, it should be said that by Christ “kings reign and princes decree justice”—that by him “princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth”—and farther, that he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. xi. 15; Isa. xlix. 23; Prov. viii. 15, 16; Rev. xix. 16). There are also practical difficulties in the way. A nation, acting rigidly on this principle, would, as we think, be compelled to withdraw all public protection from the observance of the weekly Sabbath, and to disregard the moral obligation of oaths given in evidence. The nation, as a nation, would thus have to act on principles altogether at variance with those of the families and individuals composing it—a thing as impracticable as inconsistent with the proper bonds of society; but it is chiefly as regards the prophetic vision that we have to do with this theory, and here the objection is equally fundamental. For, if the very idolatry of nations be self-will, and if this will is never to be subordinated to the will of God, then how is the stone to pound the image? and still more, how is it to take the place of the image? How is the very will of God, as taught in his Word and observed in his Church, to supplant and destroy the will of man in all things national? And yet all this is foretold, for, in the room of the image, there is to be “a kingdom, which *the God of heaven shall set up*, and which shall never be destroyed.” (V. 44.)

The other part of the theory, if separated from that now considered, is rather partial than essentially wrong. If understood to mean that every congregation ought to provide for its own expense, it is difficult to see how, on this principle, the work of Christ could be generally carried forward; besides, that it would argue a spirit of selfishness, more allied to the world than the Church of Christ. But this application of the principle would, we know, be disowned by all intelligent advocates of the system; and it would, instead thereof, be maintained that the Church of Christ, as a Church, and on the most extended possible footing, ought to seek the conversion of the world. Well, and supposing the Church thus extensively combined, to contain within its bosom nations as well as families, why, *apart from the other principle*, would you accept of the

aid of families, and refuse that of nations? And here, we rather think, many who are understood to differ will be found to agree. It is not essential to the theory of establishments, properly understood, that there should be in every nation an established form of religion. The establishment of a religion in any country is the giving to that country a religious profession—a national profession of religion. But it would be obviously a piece of national hypocrisy to cause a nation to profess what it did not believe. Only suppose the contrary, and the kingdoms of this world might be called the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, when they were in reality the kingdoms of the wicked one, and few things were more likely to keep them in that state. But a nation first instructed in the truth, and then voluntarily taking to itself a profession of that faith which it had already received, might, and ought, as we think, to do so nationally. And it is a matter of thankfulness to those who uphold the *principles* of the Church of Scotland, that these were substantially the grounds on which her establishment originally took place, and was afterwards renewed at the Revolution Settlement.

2. The opinion most directly opposed to that now examined is, that every State ought to establish a church as a means of religious instruction, and to promote social order; and then it is consistently inferred that the Church so established ought, as an institute of the State, to be subordinate to its authority. This opinion is, we believe, very generally entertained. Now, we most freely admit that such ends as the religious instruction of a people and social order, are highly worthy the attention of every enlightened and paternal Government. And we farther admit that these are among the natural and legitimate effects of every true Church. But it is in this, as in many other things, these very ends are marred by the intervention of human authority. That which gives a church all its *vital* influence, even as a reformer of abuses, is its connection with Christ as its living Head and sole Ruler. In Ezekiel's Vision of the Holy Waters, there is a vivid picture of the renovating power of religion on society, but that very power is there made to depend on their flowing direct from the presence of Jehovah in the temple. And, in connexion with this, the very commission given by Christ to his Apostles for the conversion of the world, has appended to it this promise, as the source of power: "And lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." And, to make this more clear, Christ assured his disciples that, in carrying this commission into effect, they would meet with opposition at the hands of this world's principalities and powers; and that yet in the face of such opposition, and at the expense of suffering, they were to go forward, knowing as the grounds of the authority they had received, that all power, both in heaven and in

earth, had been given unto him by whom they were sent. And from this we infer that no merely national institute can possess the power necessary for the very end contemplated; and farther, that if a true church will barter away her Lord's authority, and become a servant of men, she will become weak and corrupt as a thing of earth.

There was a remarkable illustration of this in the case of the ten tribes. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to promote certain political ends, tampered with the order of God's house, and particularly by introducing to the office of priesthood, mere creatures of the State. 1 Kings xii. 25-33; and xiii. 33-34. And the effect was, that the corruption so introduced descended from reign to reign, till the nation itself was driven into exile, as given over of God, about two hundred and fifty-four years after. In describing this final issue it is said: "Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin." For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them until the Lord had removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets." 2 Kings xvii. 21-23. An examination of the actual state of religion during the above period will greatly illustrate this opinion. So low was religion at one time, that Elijah supposed himself to be the only remaining worshipper of the true God; and even the hidden ones were given only at seven thousand, when the gross population must have amounted to several millions. At other times we have evidence of a general disposition to scoff at religion, there being only a few here and there who would ever so humble themselves as to join in divine worship.

Like effects may be even now seen flowing from similar causes. To speak only of the nations called Protestant, most of these have in their turn attempted to fetter the free exercise of Christ's authority in his own house, and they have as often experienced a corresponding abatement of the healing virtue of religion, even as regards national morality. The different churches of the Reformation do at this moment afford too many and too glaring proofs of all this, to require any detail of evidence. But the events which befel our own Church must not be altogether overlooked. The encroachments made by the Stuarts cannot be forgotten, nor can the effects which these had on the morality of the nation. The godly, whether of ministers or people, were driven forth from the Establishment, and with them the power of the heaven, as regarded the morality of the nation. The Church remaining in connection with the State, became virtually a moral nuisance, a discourager of virtue, and a promoter of scoffing and irreligion. And, as in the case of Jerusalem of old, the end of that melancholy period was with a flood, with wars and desolations. There was another experiment of this kind wrought

out more recently. The encroachment of 1712 led from one evil to another, till repeated secessions took place, withdrawing a large amount of moral worth and religious zeal from the Establishment, while those portions of the Church that acquiesced gradually sunk, losing to a great extent any efficient hold of society. And the time has not yet long gone by when the very existence of the Establishment was threatened, in consequence of the number and influence of those who had separated from the Establishment on religious grounds, and still more on account of the dense masses that had now grown up practically without any religious profession whatever. It will also be recollected, that whatever remained in the Church capable of defending her from her assailants, was to be found mainly among those whom God had raised up to vindicate at the same time Christ's sole and exclusive authority in his own house. And now that these have been for the most part driven from their posts, leaving behind them either men of whom the Psalmist could not say, "He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not"—or such as seem generally disposed to eat the bread of the State on almost whatever terms—it would be contrary to all experience were we to expect other issues than those of general coldness, indifference, and irreligion. No doubt such effects may be counteracted by other means, and all may, as we trust it will be, overruled for good; but this does not alter the thing itself.

But the view of this subject with which we have most directly to do, is the position which such a church will occupy in the light of the prophetic vision. Now, how could such a church be ever contemplated as a stone cut out of a mountain *without hands*—a Church which had been professedly instituted by the State? And how, subject to the State, could it break down the idolatry of the State? And how could it take the room of the image, while it was itself a part of it?

We are not forgetting an explanation very frequently offered, namely, that the Church, as such, is divine; but that, on becoming connected with the State, it must, as a part of the constitution, be subject thereto. This statement is complex, and therefore the deception is less easily observed. But this, doubtless, is clear, that whatever the Church was when first instituted by Christ, that it must continue to be *constitutionally*. The Church in connection with the State is fitted to serve additional purposes, and because of special advantages; but if the power and authority of Christ in the Church is to be disturbed, so will its effects, and so will its entire character as a Church of Christ. This is not merely theoretical reasoning, it is borne out by fact; for search, if you will, the history of Europe, and it will be found that, in proportion as churches have been placed under political control, to the same extent have they ceased to serve the ends for which they were appointed of

God, and degenerated into mere State engines. The spirit of the image in these circumstances enters into the stone, and it becomes as a part of the image—as a stay and support of that authority which is proper to the god of this world.

. But it is alleged that it is only in some things the State has occasion to interfere, and that these are not the most important. Admit that it is only in some things—what will this avail if these are the very points of contest between Church and State? The State will interfere only, it is said, with matters of time, and the concern of ministers ought to be with the things of eternity. Then how is the stone to pound the image? Not surely in eternity, but in time, and preparatory to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. Then, preach, it is said, but let the affairs of your church courts alone. And how, then, is the Church to act collectively? Would the stone, if reduced to powder, and thrown against the image in so many separate particles, or grains of sand, really break it? We are then told, that, if we had been only moderate in our measures, we would have met with no opposition; but that, as often as any church chooses to act otherwise, restraint must be used. Now, if by being moderate be meant keeping within ecclesiastical bounds, and not travelling into things civil, all well. The Church has no right to exceed the commission which she holds from her Lord, whether her conduct be moderate or otherwise. But if, instead of this, it be intended that as often as a church lays aside the torpor of Moderatism, and goes forth in the strength of her Great Head to the work assigned her, she is to be regarded as exceeding her proper limits, then even a Jewish doctor would counsel such legislators to beware “lest haply they be found to fight against God.” And this is, we fear, practically the thing meant. For so long as any church acts as a mere institute of the State, and lets the world alone, she will herself remain undisturbed, and grow, it may be, into so perfect a likeness of the world, as scarcely to be distinguished from it. So much is this the case, that it may be asked in which of all the nations of Europe has a thoroughly secularized church been ever disturbed by the State? And we are almost as safe in putting the converse also as a question, namely, whether it has ever happened that a Scriptural church rising in divine power, and jealously following out the command of Christ, has escaped the interference of earthly rulers? And of this, at least, we are convinced, that nothing but the revival of divine power, and consequent activity in the Church, first provoked and then brought down on her the arm of civil authority.

But, as objectors are allowed to imagine difficulties, we are farther told, that the interference complained of did not properly concern things spiritual, but merely these in so far as they touched on temporal interests, and



that, in this respect, the State has a right to interfere. This explanation, like some others, resting on middle ground, is apt to deceive. But let us bring it for a moment under the light of apostolical occurrences. The preaching of Paul at Ephesus was ruinous to the silversmiths, who made shrines for the goddess; the casting forth of a spirit of divination out of a young female slave at Philippi was of considerable loss to her master; and private Christians, in almost every place, were compelled, on conscientious grounds, to refuse obedience to sinful and often grossly immoral laws; yet neither the injury done to trade at Ephesus, nor the loss sustained by the owner of the slave at Philippi, nor even the authority of sinful laws, awed the Apostles into submission, nor are they assigned as sufficient to justify the interference of the State in these different cases. And neither is there a single word indicating that such cases belonged to some middle ground. There was no middle ground in such cases, and there was as little in ours. There was nothing common as to the sources of authority; and as to the effects, these mix and mingle in society, as do the different rivers which flow into some common basin. And it is as unphilosophical as unwise to attempt keeping them asunder. But it is vain to argue this question farther. It is altogether impossible that any Church can become a tool of the State and not lose of its moral and divine influence, just as a State would its political influence if rendered subordinate to the Church. Church and State are both of God, but they are of him for ends wholly distinct, and any attempt to render the one subordinate to the other would only the more demonstrate the folly of men and the wisdom of God.

3. There is yet another opinion as to the kind of connection which ought to subsist between Church and State. There ought, it is said, to be no such connection till the State has become, as the Church, thoroughly Christianised. The propounders of this opinion misapprehend, as we think, what properly constitutes such a connection. They mistake a mere form of the thing for the thing itself. The original and proper condition of the kingdoms of this world towards the Church is that of hostility, and just because they are in this state under the power of the wicked one. This may not, at first sight, be very apparent. The missionary may be even struck with the gaping wonder of a heathen audience, who never heard a preacher before, and some may even receive the word with gladness. But let the power of the stone once be felt, whether in restraining personal habits, or in exposing family abuses, or in seeking to alter unrighteous laws, and the hostility of the world will appear. The individual will discover reluctance to part with accustomed indulgences. Families will complain of whatever disturbs their wonted habits, however unseemly, and the nation's will must be changed before

its laws and customs, however unrighteous and oppressive, will be given up. And the consequence will almost certainly be, a progressive collision—a collision going on till the stone has prevailed over the image. Now, suppose the truth so to prevail as to bring over the State to a condition of tolerance; even this would imply a certain connection—certain limits of jurisdiction on the part of the Church would thus be allowed by the State. The same progress continued would probably lead to the bestowal of certain immunities on the Church, such as security in the observance of the weekly Sabbath, and exemption from sinful obligations, and these would render the connection still closer. After this, certain advantages or endowment might be conferred, which would just form so many additional ties. And, last of all, this progress might terminate in a constitutional union—a union leaving both parties free, each in its own department, and yet mutually upholding one another. And this, in point of fact, was very much the history of the first Church and State connection.

There is also a principle which ought to regulate this progress. The more thoroughly any nation has been leavened with Christian principle, the more intimate may be the connection of Church and State. And it is in this that the merits of the question mainly lie. It is not whether the State be so Christianised as to admit of a church connection; but what degree of intimacy would, in the circumstances, be for edification? In all circumstances, toleration ought to be desired. In some circumstances, special advantages may be sought; and, in the most favourable circumstances, the closest intimacy, consistent with perfect freedom on both sides, may be allowed. This, however, is a matter of progress, and, it may also be, of retrogression. With the progress of truth, the connection may be rendered more and more intimate, and should the reverse be the case, it ought to be less and less so.

The observance of this principle is of some practical importance. Most of the Established Churches of Europe have been of a long time under the control of civil authority, and they have, to the same extent, been ineffective as regards the purposes of the vision. Instead of reducing the image, the image has been infusing its own spirit into the stone, and, in some cases, moulding it after the fashion of the image, so that the world has been gaining on the Church rather than the Church on the world. And it now seems as if God were about to awaken these very Churches to a sense of their enslaved position, and of the ends contemplated by the sovereign Disposer of all things, as regards the Church and the world. He has permitted encroachments to be made on a Church which, of all the others, was likely to feel most; and he has awakened in that Church a spirit of enquiry which is not likely to rest till the evil

has been thoroughly exposed. That God who is sovereign in all his ways, and who often manifests his sovereignty in the employment of mean agents, has been pleased to raise this question first, and for the time, chiefly in the Church of Scotland. He has been pleased to honour this comparatively small and feeble branch of the Church of Christ, by raising up in it a testimony for truth, and by enabling his servants and people to make sacrifices which have already drawn the eyes of Europe hither. But they know little of the moving cause who fancy that all will again settle down as before. The Lutheran Reformation was cradled in a cell, and yet, from its own nature, it soon found a response in every country of Europe. It touched on abuses which were common to all; and, as soon therefore as the veil had been uplifted in Germany, men began to inquire, and to make similar disclosures in all other places. The same divine lamp which guided Luther into the chambers of German imagery, lighted Hamilton, and Wishart, and Knox into similar haunts of uncleanness in Scotland. And it is on similar grounds that we count on similar effects in our own day. Luther's lamp was the Bible, and it is ours also; and its testimony is as explicit on what concerns the world's policy as the Pope's, and the abuses of the one do as effectually interfere with the progress of true religion as the other.

We are greatly strengthened in these views from the remarkable training to which the friends of right principle in the Church of Scotland have been recently subjected. During the last twenty years they have been carried through a series of remarkable trials. The Bible controversy, which had its main seat in Scotland, led to the clearing out of foundations. The efforts which were made within the Church for the reformation of discipline and the extension of the means of grace, had a healthful and invigorating effect on all who truly set themselves to the work. The Missionary Schemes of the Church were to the Church itself as the fanning of the breeze to him who is heated and oppressed with some fatiguing toil. And the very opposition which was encountered in carrying forward ecclesiastical reform fostered habits of research and perseverance which are now even more wanted. But there were other questions, having even a closer connection with what has since occurred. The discussions which took place respecting national education and church establishments were of this kind; and it is remarkable that a very large proportion of those engaged in these controversies on the side of the Church are now ministers and members of the Free Church. The very men who mainly defended church establishments are now in a state of separation, and they have been forced into this state on the very grounds on which they had before defended these; that is, the only principles on which they could before venture to defend establishments are the

grounds on which they have, in consequence of recent encroachments, been compelled to abandon them—a strong testimony this to the necessity of reform in many other church establishments.

If there be any thing in these views, the condition of Scotland cannot be regarded otherwise than as deeply interesting. It is now as Judea and Galilee before the destruction of Jerusalem. The messengers of the gospel are hastening from parish to parish. They are, as the first preachers of the gospel, proclaiming the message of peace wherever opportunity occurs—in cities, in villages, in hamlets, in the fields, and on the sea-shore, as circumstances direct. Should these days of Scotland's visitation be neglected, these sinful lands may, like Canaan of old, become a land of barrenness; and this, as in these early times, while the gospel is despised, will be carried far and wide elsewhere. But if, instead, Scotland shall be found to know the day of her visitation, the effects may be glorious. There is now a broad sowing. Seed is cast into every soil; and if the Sun of Righteousness shine forth in the enriching power of his Divine presence, how abundant may not the harvest be! Scotland may, and we trust will, yet become as the garden of the Lord, full of plants of righteousness. And this will be especially interesting if, aroused in every direction, the different Churches of the Reformation be seen severally rising in the spirit and power of Divine truth, and refusing to be any longer the servants of men.

And now, if these be the alternative prospects of our Church and country, how much reason have we all to turn our eyes towards heaven, that God may be pleased to save our beloved country, and to fulfil in her behalf the expectation of so many—"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make 'our' Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

## SERMON XXXII.

THE BENEFITS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSE, AND THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO  
THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN IT.

BY THE REV. DAVID LANDSBOROUGH, STEVENSTON.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."—MALACHI iii. 16, 17.

THE Prophets Haggai and Zechariah had been commissioned by God to reprove the people for their slackness in rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem, after he had in his mercy brought them back from the Babylonish captivity; and Malachi, the last of the Old Testament Prophets, was sent, as we find in the context, to upbraid them for their neglect of the worship of God, after the temple was reared; and for the worldly-mindedness, and the irreligious spirit which so many of them manifested. In the worst of times, however, God has a remnant that serve him; and in times of great degeneracy, the faithful become more marked and decided characters, from the very conflicts in which they are constrained to engage; and stand forth in bolder and brighter relief, from the very darkness of the background with which they are contrasted. When of old, "the words of many were stout against the Lord," "then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." God's children have all a family likeness in every country and in every age: their character, in its leading features, is the same now as of old; and their God is the same for evermore. Many of you have this day,\* in the most solemn manner, professed yourselves to be the children of God, and the followers of his Son. You have come into the banqueting house—you have professed, in obedience to the command of Christ, to eat of the bread which has been symbolically broken, and to drink of the wine which has been mingled for you. If you have eaten as friends, and have drunk as his beloved, then have you a holy character to sustain. You are the members of a blessed family—you are the subjects of Zion's King—you are the children of the living and true God. What, then, should be your

\* Preached on the evening of a Communion Sabbath.

conduct? You are not left in ignorance on that point. You have the Word and the Spirit of God to instruct you. May the Spirit of God shed light on that portion of his Word which we have now read, and bring it home to our hearts in powerful demonstration!

In directing our attention to this subject, let us, in humble dependence on Divine grace, consider,

- I. The description which is here given of God's people.
  - II. The benefits they derive from Christian converse.
  - III. The blessings promised them by the Lord their God.
- Concluding with some practical improvement.

I. *The description given of them in the text.*

1. They are described as "they that feared the Lord." Though the fear of the Lord is spoken of as the beginning of wisdom, it is at other times spoken of as comprehending the whole of religion. To fear the Lord, we must know him; and we cannot know him as he is represented in the Scriptures, without fearing him—fearing the Lord and his goodness—for it is not the fear which a slave has of his cruel taskmaster, but the reverential fear which a dutiful child has of the kindest and most beloved of fathers. The unrenowned man does not know the Lord, and he cannot thus fear him. In the spirit of ignorance and impiety he may say, "Who is the Lord that I should serve him, and what profit would I have were I to pray to him?" Or, conscious of his rebelliousness, he may regard him as a powerful enemy, ready to crush him, and his hatred may be proportioned to his fear. O how different is the reverential, affectionate fear of him cherished by believers, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, the source of all our happiness, and the foundation of all our hopes!

2. They "think on his name." The name of the Lord is often put for the Lord himself; so that they who fear the Lord are in the habit of thinking upon his nature and his attributes—the dealings of his providence and the wonders of his grace. What is it that chiefly distinguishes man from the inferior animals? It is not speech, for some of them can be taught distinctly to articulate, and to imitate the language of men. It is not thought, for they do think, and some of them are possessed of considerable sagacity. It is the power of *thinking upon God*. The inferior animals know nothing of God, and cannot be taught to know Him, and consequently their thoughts rise no higher than man. But it is the noble distinguishing characteristic of man that he can think of God, of God who made him, who gave him rational faculties, and an immortal soul.

But, while the power of thinking upon God is granted to man alone of his creatures here below, do all men avail themselves of the power which so honourably distinguishes them? Alas! alas! there is a numerous class of whom it is written, "God is not in all their thoughts." *The ungodly*, the very term by which they are described, tell us that "they do not like to retain God in their knowledge;" that "they live without God in the world;" and "walk in the way of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes." But, blessed be God, there is another class who love God, and fear God, and think on his name. They remember that he is Jehovah, the uncreated, the self-existing God; that he is the Almighty—possessed of all power—and that his goodness and wisdom and mercy are equal to his power. They remember with thankfulness that not only has he made himself known as Jehovah-Nissi—the Lord my banner, but as Jehovah-Tsidkenū—the Lord our Righteousness. Is it not delightful for a God-fearing people to think on the name of the Lord, when, through Christ, they can address this good, and wise, and all-powerful God as their heavenly Father? They think on his works; and all his works praise Him: the earth, which he created out of nothing, by the word of his power—the heavens, which he stretched forth as a curtain, as a tabernacle in which he might dwell—the sun, which he made to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. They think not only on his power and wisdom, manifested in the creation of man, and of the various living creatures which inhabit the earth, but they think also on the kindness of his providence in bountifully supplying the returning wants of the countless creatures he has formed. They remember that the kind care of Providence is not confined to man, nor even to the birds of the air, or the beasts of the field; but is extended to myriads of myriads of minute creatures, whether they creep on the earth, or fly in the air, or wanton in the watery element. But, above all, they delight to think on the greatest of all his great works, the work of Redemption through Jesus Christ his Son. Here mercy—the loveliest attribute of his character—shines forth. Here mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In this he has magnified his law and made it honourable. By this he can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Their meditation on his glorious name and blessed attributes is sweet; and it is necessary for closer communion with him and with increasing conformity to him. It would be altogether inconsistent with their character as the children of God, were they not to think on him. Would we think a son affectionate, were he never to think of his father in a foreign country, though from that distant land he were sending him many tokens of paternal kindness, and making the richest provision for his education, and for his comfortable

support? And could we for a moment think of ranking him among the children of God, who never thought of him who watches over us with more than a father's kindness, and who offers us a rich inheritance in the world to come?

3. But what is chiefly held forth in our text is, that "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." It is very plain that, as it is mentioned with approbation, it was not idle, or foolish, or sinful conversation in which they engaged, but that their speech was with grace seasoned with salt. It was not mere talk—godly talk, as it has been termed, without the spirit of godliness—they "thought on the name of the Lord," and they spake often one to another of Him whom they feared and loved. There is often much waste of words where there is little exercise of thought; but God's people are a thoughtful people, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The men of this world are not slow to speak, but they do not speak because they believe, but often to give vent to an evil heart of unbelief. Many of the Jews, at this period of their history, "set their mouth against the heavens," speaking arrogantly and insolently of Him who dwelleth in the heavens. They spake boldly as not ashamed, and stoutly as resolved to stand to it. And when God charges them with this guilt, and calls them to account, they treat the matter lightly, and, instead of being humbled, and submissive, and contrite, they say in the pride of their hearts, "What, have we spoken so much against thee?" God, however, keeps an account, and he gives an answer in verses 13, 14, 15, "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, What, have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, it is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

It was then that "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." They would speak no doubt with grief of the wickedness of their countrymen, and no doubt would raise their prayers in their behalf, that their hearts might be softened. They would speak also of what the Lord had done for their forefathers, in bringing them out of Egypt, and in giving them the possession of the land of promise; and while they would lament that, because of their own sins, they had been carried away from this beloved land, they would speak of the tender mercy of the Lord, in bringing them back from Babylon, and enabling them to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. And while tears would start in their eyes when they thought on its great inferiority in grandeur of appearance to the temple of Solomon, in which the aged among them had worshipped, they would



be comforted when they remembered that the Lord had promised, by his servant Haggai, that "the glory of this latter house should be greater than of the former;" and while they would often speak one to another of the way in which this promise would be fulfilled, they would connect it, as the Prophet had done, with the coming of Zion's King; for it was when the Desire of all nations came, that He was to fill this place with glory, and in this place to give peace.

It is one of the characteristics, then, of God's people, that they speak often one to another of the Lord's mind and merciful dealings towards them. God is the treasure of their soul. They often think on this soul-treasure, and therefore they delight to "speak often one to another" of what is so precious to them. What can be more natural and reasonable than this? Is it not in perfect analogy with the conduct of men as to other things in which they take great interest? When the Jews had become worldly-minded, and sought no higher happiness than what they derived from their increasing flocks and herds, do we not find one of their countrymen saying of them, in language of reproach, "their talk is of bullocks?" When misers meet, if they consult the dictates of their hearts, have they not pleasure in telling how they add penny to penny and pound to pound? When a person of learning or science has devoted himself to any particular branch of study, what delight has he in conversing with one who has made distinguished progress in the same branch? Do not persons of the same craft delight to associate, because they have topics of conversation in which they feel interested, and have pleasure in receiving or in imparting information. If farmers have pleasure in conversing with each other respecting their crops or their flocks and herds—if misers take delight in speaking of their gold—if scholars have high satisfaction in conversing on favourite branches of study—and tradesmen in conversing on what is connected with their craft—should not the children of God's family have pleasure in conversing with each other respecting their Heavenly Father, and his most merciful dealings towards the sons of men.

II. *The benefits arising to them from Christian converse.*—Their Christian graces are cherished and improved. As "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." When is it that men more than usually indulge in religious conversation? Is it not in a time of revival? They then more frequently meet for social prayer—to adore the Almighty—to pour out their hearts in thanksgiving before Him—to confess their sins—to ask the forgiveness of them through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus—to solicit the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on their souls, that he would be as the dew unto Israel—as

showers upon the tender herb—as a plentiful rain to refresh his heritage when it is weary. And having spoken to God in prayer, they reverently read his Word in which He speaks to them, saying, here are we to receive thy message, and to hear all that thou commandest us. And having spoken to God in their prayers, and having listened to his message to them in his Word, can they separate without “speaking one to another” of what that gracious message contains? When, in answer to their prayers, the Spirit takes of the things that are Christ’s and shews them their blessed import, giving them clearer views of God’s great love to them, and infusing into their hearts greater love in return, they not only ponder on the Lord’s unspeakable mercy to themselves, but as they muse the fire burns, and they feel it a relief, and a satisfaction and delight to pour out their hearts to each other, saying, like the Psalmist, “Come, hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul.” Their love to God is thus increased, and their love to each other, as the blessed children of the same benignant Father. Religious knowledge also is increased, for they who have become more acquainted with the mysteries of his kingdom, find that they become wiser themselves, when, in the spirit of Christian love, they are striving to instruct others; as God, when they are watering others, waters their own souls. In mutual Christian converse the desponding are cheered, and they who are beginning to settle on their lees are roused and quickened. When iniquity abounds, when the love of many waxes cold, and when, because of danger from surrounding enemies, men’s hearts are failing them for fear, what an advantage is it to the timid to have the privilege of “speaking often” with those who are strong in faith, and rich in love, and zeal, and devotedness, and who delight to pour forth their praises of the Lord! The influence of a brave man is great, laying religion out of the question. How often has the bold and noble bearing even of one brave soldier turned the tide of battle, when in the high places of the field, he rushes into the hottest of the fight, and commands others to follow, and carries along with him, as on the wings of victory, those who but a moment before had turned their backs in flight! How great the influence, then, of the good, and hard, and courageous soldier of Christ, when in the hour of danger he says, Should such as we flee? No! let us be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might—let us quit ourselves like men—let us advance unflinchingly in the path of duty, and the Lord will either open up to us the path of safety, or he will overrule even temporary suffering for his own glory and our good. “Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees; say to them who are of fearful heart, be strong, fear not; behold the Lord cometh with vengeance, even the Lord with a recompense, He will come and save us.”

III. *What is promised to them by the Lord.*—The Lord lends an ear to the godly conversation of his people; “the Lord hearkened and heard it.” How condescending is the Lord! He who deigns to listen to the halleluiahs of the heavenly inhabitants, lends his ear to hear every gracious word that proceeds from the mouth of his children here below. Let the conversation be ever so private, it escapes not his notice. Let it be early or late, by many or by few, the Lord hearkens and hears. Let it be in times of danger from a watchful enemy—in the most sequestered spot—in the wildest glen—on the barren heaths, or in the mountain cave—let it be in lowest whisper, lest it should awake at midnight some lurking foe, the whisper scales the heavens, it enters into the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth, the recording angel hears the welcome sound, and, with the blissful glow of an enraptured cherub, enters on a bright page of his book of remembrance the faint whisperings of persecuted outcasts, to form a part of the imperishable annals of eternity. The Lord knows their affliction, and can interpret their groaning, and can be touched with their sighs. To the outpourings of their heart in godly conversation he not only listens, but, to teach us that he listens well-pleased, and will not be forgetful, in accommodation to our ideas, he says, “a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” Great earthly kings had books of remembrance in which were recorded the good deeds of their subjects. When Mordecai was instrumental in saving the life of King Ahasuerus, “it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king;” and yet, had it not been written in a book of better remembrance, it might have remained a dead letter, and Mordecai might have been forgotten. But the Lord meant it to be conducive to the welfare, not only of Esther and Mordecai, but of his people throughout many provinces; and when his set time for favouring them was come, the mighty monarch, though on a bed of down, and in a splendid chamber, became restless and sleepless; and under divine impulse, though he knew it not, caused “the book of the records of the chronicles to be brought, and to be read before him;” and then he remembered Mordecai, and forthwith commanded that he should be rewarded as one whom the king delighted to honour.

Let those, then, that fear the Lord, speak often one to another, and delight to make mention of his name, even though they should be placed in circumstances of difficulty and danger. Not only does the Lord hearken and hear—not only is a book of remembrance written before him for them that fear the Lord, and that think upon his name; but “they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts in that day when I make up my jewels.” What a promise! How full of blessedness! They

shall be mine ! It cannot fail, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. They *shall* be mine ! Even now they are his ; they are his chosen, his ransomed, his little flock. Even now he remembers them with that love which he beareth to his own, and confers upon them many tokens of his kindness ; but as if all he bestows on them here were nothing, he passes over all his blessings of time, and points to the glories of immortality. “They shall be mine,” saith he, “in that day when I make up my jewels.” Here they may be reviled—here they may be oppressed, and persecuted, and trampled on ; but there is a day coming when they shall be brought forth as the light, when they shall be beheld with wonder, when it shall be said with astonishment, “Are these they who once lay among the pots, who are now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold ?” “In that day” the Lord will send forth his angels to gather his jewels from the four winds of heaven, to shine as the ornaments of his Redeemer’s crown. *Then* is Christ to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe in him. Then he is to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied.

How rich are his promises ! They are to be his own ! They are to be his jewels ! He is to treat them as his children ! Few have jewels ; and the few that have what are called jewels, prize the possession, keep them with care, and seek to transmit them to their posterity. But what jewel is there, however precious, that would not be willingly surrendered to save the life, or to rescue from painful suffering a beloved son ? The Lord speaks of believers not only as his jewels, his peculiar treasure, but he speaks of them affectionately as his sons, “I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Every word is fitted to cheer and gladden. He will spare them ! This is their rejoicing, that he is a God of mercy. They seek to serve him, but they are constrained to cry, “Our leanness, our leanness ! our weakness, our sins, our shortcomings, our insufficiency ! Enter not into judgment with us, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” He tells them that he will not lay judgment to the line ; that, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him ; that he hath set forth his Son as a propitiation for sin ; that he will behold God their shield ; that he will accept them in the beloved ; that “he will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” He has spared them here—when yet enemies he spared them. When yet in a far country, he touched their hearts and inclined them to return. When yet far off, his bowels yearned over them, “he ran and fell on their neck and kissed them.” Amidst all their waywardness, after they had been brought near, he spared them. He spared them through time, and will he not spare them in that day

when he is to pronounce their doom for eternity? He will do more than spare them—he will crown them with glory—he will bless them with a heavenly Father's blessing—he will welcome them to the realms of everlasting day, to walk in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem with the King of Zion, by whom they were ransomed, and who will fill their mouths with the song of joy. Feeling the kindlings of that holy flame with which, like the enraptured cherubim, they are everlastingly to glow, they shall cry out "this is our God; we waited for him and he has saved us. This is the Lord, we waited for him, and now we are glad and rejoice in his salvation."

You that "fear the Lord and think on his name," do you not also love him? If you greatly love him, may we not expect that, loving him and thinking upon him, you will also often speak one to another of his greatness and his goodness, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh? Can you refrain from "speaking one to another," when you think on the great salvation he has wrought out for you? "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish." "Should not perish!" What is it to "perish?" "What is it for an immortal soul to perish?" The tongue even of inspiration cannot tell. It can only say, "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God! And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear!" Were we to ask one who had been carried away in his wickedness, and had perished in his guilt, what it is to perish, would he not say, "I cannot tell?" for in that gloomy gulph, a gloomier gulph seems ready to receive him. He looks forward to the resurrection and the judgment, when body and soul having been partners in guilt, shall be doomed to be partners in shame and everlasting misery. Or, were we to outstrip time, and pass beyond the judgment—were we to enter the precincts of eternal woe, and with trembling step to approach those gates then shut, and never, never, never to be opened—were we to behold through their adamant bars, one who in body and soul had been cast into hell to drink for ever the cup of trembling—were we to ask that victim of hopeless woe, what it is to "perish?" would he not, with a scream of anguish which would make our hair stand on end, and our very blood to curdle, say, "I cannot tell, for who can tell the end of that which is endless! Who can fathom the depths of that which is unfathomable! Who can calculate the amount of that misery which is already beyond expression excruciating, and which is to continue to increase throughout eternal years! O it is a fearful thing to perish! to fall into the hands of a living and an offended God!"

But is the greatness of this salvation, or of the love of God in providing it, to be measured only by the greatness of the misery from which believers are ransomed? No, let us think on the happiness which God has laid up in store for those who love him, and then have we topics fitted to make our hearts to glow, and our words to burn, and our tongues to delight to speak the praises of the Lord. But even an angel's tongue could but feebly speak his praise, when the wonders of redemption form the glorious theme. When we have given our imagination full scope, how faint is the idea which we can form of the future felicity of the redeemed of the Lord! It is greater than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived. It is a joy unspeakable; a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory! Precious above the grasp of mortals must the inheritance be, when it was purchased, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot!

And then let us consider how sure this blood-bought inheritance is. It is promised by the Lord himself, all whose promises are yea and amen. Nay, not only is it promised, but the promise is confirmed with an oath. And, as if promise and oath had not been enough to satisfy our weak faith, when so much is at stake, he gives us a pledge, a foretaste of blessedness; for believers are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory. He gives grace; and having given grace as the pledge, he will undoubtedly give, in fulfilment of the pledge, glory, as the promised possession. For grace and glory differ not in kind, but in degree. Grace is the bud, glory is the sweet, unwithering blossom—grace is the precious seed, glory is the golden harvest—grace is the dawn, the purple streakings of the sky, the orient tints of the morning; glory is the light, the splendour, the bright effulgence of the perfect day—grace is the night, the armour, the valour in the day of battle; glory is the shout of victory, the song of triumph, the dividing of the spoil, the crowning of the conqueror, the peace and rest and blessedness that await the people of God.

## SERMON XXXIII.

THE DIVINE COMPASSION FOR SINNERS.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER LESLIE, ARBROATH.

\* Why will ye die, O house of Israel !"—EZEK. xviii. 31.

THE text is brief but comprehensive, and most affecting ; and the question which it contains is strikingly illustrative of the tenderness and compassion of Him who condescends in mercy to ask it. Surely there is in it something which ought to excite our admiration of Divine condescension, and to call forth from our hearts songs of grateful and adoring praise. For we not only behold God offering to the poor sinner the mercy and the love which he needs, but actually going after him, entreating him to stand and bethink, exhorting and imploring him to accept of them, when he ungratefully, and with aggravated guilt, turns his back on them as unworthy of his attention and regard. Israel, like all others, had wandered from the path of safety, and exposed themselves to that withering curse which constitutes the threatened penalty of a broken law. But, from among the nations of the earth, God, in righteous sovereignty, selected them to be his peculiar people ; and, amid the darkness which brooded over their guilty souls, caused a light to shine which pointed to a coming Deliverer, and exhibited the only and divinely-appointed means of restoration to heaven's forfeited love. And might it not then have been expected, that, having thus told them of an approaching Saviour, and graciously marked out to them the pathway that conducts to glory, if they wilfully closed their eyes against this light, and persisted in treading the downward road to destruction, God would have said of them in just indignation, " They are joined to their idols, let them alone." But no ! Divine condescension extended itself still further ; and, mercy rejoicing over judgment, God pursued, as it were, his stiff-necked Israel, and called to them, in sympathizing compassion and most touching love, " Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel !" Brethren, ours is a clearer light than Israel ever enjoyed, but still we have preferred the darkness to it, and have walked in the ways of sin ; and surely, though not a single expostulation had been employed—though justice had long ere now taken its course against us, and sent us from a land of

Bibles and Gospel privileges to the place of consummate misery and deathless woe—we dare not have questioned the righteousness of the sentence. But when, instead of this, mercy seems resolved to win and to save us, and, amid our thoughtless and guilty career, we hear a voice behind us—the voice of the gracious and compassionate God—saying, “Why will ye die,” shall we, can we, continue regardless of such love, and of our own present and eternal weal? In discoursing from this text, we shall strive, in God’s strength, to press the question it contains; and, be it remembered, it is a question asked at you, not by a fellow-sinner, but by the infinitely Holy One, at whose tribunal you have so soon to stand.

I. First, then, “Why will ye die?” Is it because you have concluded that God the Father is unwilling to save you?

Who is this lying in Gethsemane’s garden prostrate on the ground, whose sweat is, as it were, great drops of blood? It is the Son of God. And what is the cause of such awful agony? No human foe is near to lift his hand in acts of violence. The Father gives him the cup of wrath to drink, and this it is that harrows his soul, and makes him “exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” And who is that crucified on the heights of Calvary, “whose long reiterated cry bespeaks his soul’s deep agony?” Who can the sufferer be, when the sun refuses to behold his dying torment, and the rocks are rent, and the graves give up their dead, and earth is convulsed to its inmost centre? It is the Son of God! And why is he there, and why does the doleful cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” proceed from the lips of him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?” The Father has taken the sword of justice from its sheath, is plunging it into the bosom of his own Son, and with his own hand is holding it there, from love to a condemned and perishing people, till that blood be shed which may make them whiter than the snow—till that atonement be complete through which alone they can be saved! And where, then, is your warrant to conclude that the Father is unwilling to save you? What stronger or more affecting pledge could he have given of his love to sinners, and of his desire to rescue them from death and hell, than when, in order to deliver them, he poured the ~~the~~ials of his wrath on the head of his only, his beloved, his eternal Son? “Why will ye die?” Perhaps you reply, the Father gave his Son to death only for those who were the objects of his electing and everlasting love. And is this the reason why you banish from you all anxiety about your souls—why you are unconcerned about a coming eternity—why you will die? If you answer affirmatively, would you condescend to state by what mysterious process you have



climbed to the throne of the Almighty, and searched the immutable record that lies before him, so as to be assured that you are not among the elect of God. We admit that God gave his Son to die for his own elect, and for them alone; and to deny this, as many in the pride of their hearts have done, were to overlook and gainsay that sovereignty of God which imparts consistency to the Bible, and appears so conspicuous in all its parts, and in the exercise of which, to the manifestation of his own glory, "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardeneth whom he will." But assuredly this shall be no excuse for indifference and unbelief on your part. What you and your children, as guilty sinners, have to do with is, the revealed and undisguised command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" and not the eternal and hidden decree which is wrapt up among those secret things that belong to the Lord. You dare not assert that the Father is unwilling to save you. Sinners! has it really come to this with you, that you are prepared to charge Him, whose name and whose nature is love, with the cause of your destruction? Will you venture to tell the Almighty, when you stand at his great White Throne, that he was unwilling to save you? No; let not that, then, be your excuse for indifference *now*, which you will not dare to utter *then*. When the guilty prodigal, whose case is recorded in the gospel, came to himself, we are not told that he inquired whether he was among the elect or not; but we are told that, resting on the precious truth that there was plenty in his father's house and to spare, while he was ready to starve, he resolved to return to his father. And what reception did he meet with? Did the father indicate an unwillingness to receive him? No; but when his eye beheld the first footstep of his returning, though most guilty son, his bowels were moved with compassion, and, instead of waiting to hear his confession, he ran to meet him; yea, he fell on his neck and kissed him, and said, "bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." Well, my hearers, the same Father addresses you, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of any sinner, but rather will that all should turn unto me and live;" "Come now and let us reason together, with the Lord, though yours sins be as scarlet, I will make them as wool, though they be red like crimson, I will make them as snow." Oh, sinners, can you not—will you not—trust his faithfulness? Can you steel your hearts against such tenderness? Can you still live without God, without hope, without prayer, without concern about your souls, though they must very soon enter the world of spirits and eternity—share either the bliss of that

house with many mansions, or the unutterable woe of the damned in hell? Can you any longer resist the Father's merciful inquiry, "Why will ye die?"

II. "Why will ye die?" Is not Jesus an Almighty Saviour, the very Saviour whom you need? Dear friends, you might have a reply to the tender inquiry before us, had no Saviour been provided, and were you forced in sad despondency to ask, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"—I say, were you left in utter darkness as to the means of deliverance, you might reply to the question in the text, We desire not to die, but we can give no ransom for our life—we cannot satisfy the demands of an infinitely just and holy law. But why will ye die, when an all-sufficient Saviour stands at your very door? Jesus, the Son of God, in the plenitude of his redeeming mercy, and in the outgoing of his unparalleled love, has done what you could never have accomplished. He has "magnified the law and made it honourable"—he has fulfilled all its demands—he has submitted to its penalty and endured its curse—he continued in agony on the tree till justice had not another demand to make, yea, till it cordially kissed mercy above his bleeding head, and with mercy advanced to save those for whom he died. And by Christ's resurrection from the dead, and ascension to the right hand of power, has not the Father given attestation to a lost and perishing world that the ransom is accepted, and that, through faith in him who paid it, the chief of sinners may be saved? Oh! why, then, will ye die? You have nothing to bring to God as the procuring price of your forgiveness. If this were the case, we would pronounce your condition hopeless. But the ground of pardon and acceptance is the active and passive obedience, the doing and dying of the Son of God. He is revealed to you as the very Saviour who can meet all the exigencies of your case, who has a fulness of merit to justify and of grace to sanctify. Why, then, will ye die? Perhaps one replies, "I have long continued careless and unmoved, and though I have from Sabbath to Sabbath enjoyed the means of grace, and listened alike to threatenings of wrath and promises of love, still I have forgotten and slighted the grace of which I have so often heard; I fear there can be no salvation for me." Another may answer, "I have grown old and grey-headed in sin, and though I have always made a profession of religion, and have regularly attended the house of prayer, still I have never given my heart to God,"

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nor by faith closed in with an offered Christ; my children have grown up around me, some of them have entered the world of spirits, but never have I prayed with them and for them, nor told them of Jesus and his love. You need not ask me, 'Why wilt thou die?' for surely I must die." Nay, we answer both, in the cheering language of the gospel, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." We cannot allow you to die under the belief that Christ is not able to save you. The burden of your guilt may be very heavy, but it is not too heavy for the hand of an Almighty Saviour to take it off, for he has an arm that is full of strength. Your stains may be very dark and very deep, but not too deep for the blood of the Lamb to remove them, and to make you whiter than the snow. Your fetters may be very strong and very tightly bound, but not too tightly to prevent Emmanuel from executing the very purpose of his mission and death, in setting the lawful captive free. Your disease may be deeply seated, it may be very inveterate, but not too inveterate to yield to the healing virtue of the Balm in Gilead, and the restoring skill of the Physician there. Oh, dishonour not the once crucified, but now exalted and reigning Redeemer, by thinking that he is unable to save you. Though for threescore years and ten you may have been regardless of his glory and of your soul's welfare—though you may have been amassing guilt from youth to old age—though you may have been exhausting the patience and tenderness of a most gracious and sympathising Redeemer, till time has covered your heads with grey hairs, and on your faces age has drawn its many wrinkles; still if now—at the eleventh hour—grace has made you willing to come to him, we tell you, on the authority of his own word, that he is able to save you, for "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." None ever perished who came to him. No distemper has ever yet baffled his power to cure it. No case that has been brought to him has he been unable to meet. Why, then, should you perish? We cannot but expostulate with you. Whether you are now in the morning of your days, or already your feet have begun to stumble on the dark mountains of death, while we know that Christ is the very Saviour who is suited to your case, we cannot refrain from putting it to you again and again, and insisting on an explicit answer to the question so compassionately asked by God in the text, "Why will ye die?"

III. "Why will ye die?" Are ye not most cordially invited to come to Christ and live? You might, again, have attempted to give some

reply to the affecting question in the text, if an Almighty Saviour had merely been revealed, but no invitation had been given to you to come to him and be saved. A house may be quite sufficient to defend me from the wintry tempest, but I may not be welcomed to its cheering shelter. A medicine may be quite sufficient to counteract and remove my inveterate disease, but I may not be permitted to taste it. But "Why will ye die," if not only a Saviour who can meet all the requirements of your case has been provided, but if also you are most cordially invited to take hold of him and live? O guilty and perishing men, why will ye die? I am sure there is not a single feature in your sad condition for which there is not a counterpart gospel invitation. Is *degrading vassalage* a feature of your natural state—are you naturally led *captive* of Satan at his will? Then are you invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written, "Turn to the stronghold ye *prisoners* of hope, for even to-day do I declare that I will render to you double." Is *pollution* and *depravity* a feature in your case? Then are you invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Is it a feature in your case that you are *burdened with a load* of guilt, and ready to sink beneath its pressure down to the lowest hell? Then are ye invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written, "Come unto me all ye that *labour* and are *heavy laden*, and I will give you rest." Are *poverty*, and *nakedness*, and *blindness* features in your case? Then are ye invited to take the remedy and live, for again it is written, "I counsel thee to buy of me *gold* tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and *white raiment* that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with *eye salve* that thou mayest see." Poor sinners! Is it a feature in your case that through grace you are *willing* to be saved? Then are ye invited to take the remedy and live, for it is written, "Whosoever *will* let him take the water of life freely." Why then will ye die? What reason are you prepared to assign? Why will ye perish of *hunger*, when He in whom all fulness dwells is thus addressing you, "Open thy mouth wide and I will *fill it*?" Why will ye die of thirst, when Jesus is standing at the wells of salvation and trying to allure you to himself by the invitation, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely?" Oh, why should you remain at a distance from the fold of salvation with inevitable and everlasting destruction before you, when the great, the good, the chief Shepherd of the sheep thus addresses you, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved,

and shall go in and out and find pasture?" Ye that are out of Christ, and therefore perishing, are ye resolved to cast behind you those full and precious invitations—are you determined to flee from the very arms that are outstretched to save you? Thus welcomed, thus entertained, thus earnestly urged to be saved, "Why will ye die?"

IV. "Why will ye die?" Does not the Spirit, by his *common* operations, strive with you to induce you to close with the offered Saviour and live. Not only has an all-sufficient Saviour been provided—not only are you most cordially invited to come to him—but amid your natural unwillingness to receive him, yea, the aversion with which you turn from him, the Spirit has often been, and He may be still striving with you to convince you of Christ's excellency, and to impress you with the necessity of laying hold of him. We believe that all gospel hearers are more or less the subjects of the Spirit's common operations. Have you never had momentary convictions at least that all was not right with you; that your religion was but a cold, heartless, dead profession, and that your hopes (if hopes you at all entertained), instead of being based on the immovable foundation laid in Zion, were like the spider's web, at the mercy of every wind that blows? The Spirit was then striving with you, although you grieved and quenched him. Have you not at times, under the faithful preaching of the glorious gospel, been impressed with the thought that really it is not enough to give the cold assent of the head to the revealed Bible truth that *there is a hiding place* from Divine and merited indignation to the poor traveller to eternity, and that, if he would be safe amid the storms and tempests that are quickly gathering, he must *enter* it and abide in it? Have you not felt at times, that it is not enough for the sinner, stained with condemning guilt, to know merely that a fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, but that to be saved he must also be personally sprinkled with the atoning blood which it contains? When the ambassador of Christ has faithfully raised the alarm cry, and warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come, have you not felt the necessity of being hid in the very clefts of that Rock of Ages which bore up amid the violence of the wrath which an eternally chosen people deserved? True you may have rubbed off such impressions, you may have banished from your breasts, as unwelcome visitants, such fears of the second death, but this does not alter the fact that the Spirit was then striving with you. Perhaps he is striving with you at this moment. We implore you, resist not his operations—stifle not the convictions he imparts—grieve him not away, for each time that you quench the Spirit is just a step in advance towards the commission of that sin which is never forgiven.

If you deafen yourselves to the cry of danger—if you listen not to his timely warnings—no more may he ask at you the touching question in the text, “Why will ye die?”

V. Finally, “Why will ye die?” Are ye, after mature deliberation, finally and firmly resolved to reject all that can make you happy, and to court all that can make you miserable? Are you resolved to be Satan’s slaves rather than Jesus’ freemen? Have you made up your minds that the vials of that wrath which agonizes soul and body through eternity, are preferable to that cup of salvation which the Gospel invites you to drink? Are you resolved that Christ and salvation shall never be yours? Are you resolved that those healthful countenances shall, through eternity, be writhed in unutterable anguish? Are you resolved that the voices which have been mingled to-day in the songs of Zion, shall be ultimately and for ever spent in the hideous wailings and lamentations of those who are consigned to the lake that burneth? Have the shrieks of eternal despair more charms than the new and ceaseless song of ransomed, happy Zion? Are you resolved to dwell with devouring flames, and to lie down in everlasting burnings, rather than in good earnest seek an entrance into that blessed abode where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore? Are you resolved to cast away eternal life, with all the glory and the happiness it implies, and to prefer the second death with all the unmitigated agonies it ensures? Eternal Spirit! draw nigh in preventing grace, touch and soften every heart, that all may listen to the affecting question, “Why will ye die?”

## SERMON XXXIV.

THE MORTALITY OF MAN AND THE ETERNITY OF THE WORD OF GOD.

BY THE REV. J. W. TAYLOR, FLISK AND CRIECH.

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—1 PET. i. 24-25.

It was Isaiah the seer who first delivered to the Church the words of my text. The thing was secretly brought to him, and his ear received a little thereof. A spirit passed before his face—an image was before his eyes; there was silence, and he heard a voice, "and the voice said, Cry; and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Peter the Apostle is directed to repeat the warning. It is a warning which the listening ear can hear each day. It is whispered from the tomb—it is uttered in the sanctuary—day tells it to the night, and night echoes back the sound—every sick-bed, every passing funeral confirms it—and rolling weeks, and rolling months, and rolling years, proclaim to man that he is mortal.

But death is here relieved by life, incessant change by perpetual endurance. A contrast is presented betwixt man's mortality and the eternity of God's Word—betwixt the fleeting nature of all earthly glory and the abiding nature of Gospel impressions and of Gospel attainments.

We shall speak of these particulars in the order in which they are presented before us, looking for the promised help of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is nothing profitable and nothing permanent.

I. *All flesh is as grass.*

To see the force of the resemblance which is here instituted betwixt the fading nature of the grass and the frail nature of man, we must forget for a time the idea which we receive from the herbage of our own fields. The greenness of our grass endures throughout the year; but it is different in eastern countries. Vegetation there is subject to many

checks and to rapid decays. It is often as rapid in its decay as it is in its growth. Like Jonah's gourd, it comes up in a night and withers in a day. In the morning, the fields may look fresh; and their tender blade, bathed in the dews of heaven, may delight the gazer's eye by their enlivening verdure; but the sun rises with a sudden heat, and, before he sets, the fields are withered and burned up. But should the grass escape such sudden blastings, it cannot outlive its own season. Autumn will change its colour—winter will prepare its shroud.

The force of the comparison is naked and open. From Adam till now, what is the history of our race? It is a lengthened and almost unvarying bill of mortality. What is the most necessary part of a family possession? It is a burial-place where to lay our dead. What are the words which apply alike to all? It is the solemn sentence—"Dust to dust, earth to earth." Go where you will, you will everywhere see the ravages of death. There is no island of the blest—no famed spot of earth where you will not meet with the grim and ghastly trophies of his triumph. There is no speech nor language where you will not hear his hoarse voice calling, "Return ye children of men." The pyramids of Egypt, while they are a monument of human labour, are also a monument of human folly and of man's mortality. The decaying cemetery in Jehoshaphat's vale reads to us an intelligible lesson, even though the epitaphs of the tombs are obliterated. The thickening grave-stones of every church-yard speak to the eye and to the heart, and say, "All flesh is as grass."

There are times when the truth of man's mortality is forced upon the mind with the most striking solemnity. The sun rises with a burning heat, and the grass withereth. The progress of the plague, or a fever's desolation, fills the church-yard and thins the ranks of families; and every house wears mourning, because death hath entered the dwelling; and every countenance wears gloom, because of the uncertainty and fears in which every man lives. There are other times when the grass is not withered by a sudden stroke, but is cut down by the hand of the mower. At morn it flourishes, it is allowed to stand during the day, but by evening it is doomed to fall before the sickle of the reaper. It is fading at the best. So is it with man. He may escape sudden death, or rapid disease, or premature decay—he may live during his day—but evening comes, and relentless death with his sweeping scythe lays him low.

Every man knows these things; every man is assured that he must die—that sooner or later he will be carried to his long home, and will lie down in his narrow bed. Yet on how few does this assurance exercise a practical effect! It is a general truth of which men speak, but of which they seldom think. Let me ask you, dying man, Have you ever



retired into your closet, and held converse with death ? Have you ever said to yourself, After a few short years are come and gone, I will go to that place whence I shall not return ? Have you ever asked yourself, What shall become of me after I die ? Is it true what the Bible says, "After death is the judgment?" Must this soul which animates my bosom live *for ever* ? How awfully solemn are such thoughts ! "O my poor soul, what will become of thee ! where wilt thou go !" was the cry of mingled uncertainty and despair uttered by the ambitious Mazarine before his dissolution.

## II. *The glory of man is as the flower of the grass.*

In this clause, the sacred writer narrows his statement into greater particularity. The flower of a plant is its most delicate part. The slightest accident may destroy it. A night's frost would blight the hopes of a year. A rude blast would scatter the blossom's leaflets like falling snow. An untender touch would carry death with it. Equally fragile, equally delicate, is "the glory of man." What are we to understand by these words ? We are to understand all that in which man delights, and after which he earnestly seeks. His health, his wealth, his talent, his rank, his influence, are man's glory. These are the flowers which bloom on the stem of humanity. These are the proud branches which spring out of its roots. And how easily are they blasted ! A man often outlives his glory ; he often buries in the dust what he delighted in. That man, whose feeble steps and whose pale countenance tell of sickness, once rejoiced in his strength. But now a fever's breath has blown upon him—his strength has been dried up like a summer's brook—the flower of his health has faded away, and even his words, and his looks, proclaim that he is feeble and infirm. We have even more striking and complete confirmations of the truth of my text. You hear of a man in the midst of health arrested by the hand of death. It was but yesterday you met him, and saw his face blooming with the fulness of enjoyment ; to-day you are called to look upon the same joyous countenance stiffened in death. Are you not ready, in such circumstances, to join in the Prophet's asseveration—"Surely the people are grass."

*Talent* is another flower which is often suddenly blasted. The poor paralytic looks upon you with a vacant eye ; his mind, which was formerly busied with all that is engaging, and useful, and expanding, is now a blank. Sir Isaac Newton, before his death, could not comprehend the meaning of one of his own axioms. The witty and accomplished Dean Swift died a lunatic. Humbling, yet true, is the saying, that much learning is often allied to madness. It is but a thin partition which frequently separates betwixt the workings of genius, and the

eccentricities of an imbecile mind. Is it different with *wealth*? What scrambling, what straining do we see among men, to obtain this world's good things! The sea wafts our ships; ingenuity strives to outstrip time; the furnace blazes; the storehouse rises; the animal creation groans; and man is worked like a galley slave—and why all this commotion? just that riches may be increased, and that the little heaps of golden dust, which all men seem so busy in gathering, may be enlarged. And let them succeed to their heart's content; let them gain all that they can wish of earthly riches—what have they got after all? An uncertain and unsatisfying portion. These riches may take to themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle towards heaven. These riches are no protection against the ills of life. (Jas. v. 1.) These riches cannot purchase a reprieve, or an exemption from death. They must all be left behind, for man can carry nothing hence. That care-worn, wasted man, who lies on his bed, and whose trembling hand, under the guidance of another, traces the letters of his name, is signing his last will and testament. Carefully did he collect, and closely did he keep his wealth; but now he must part with it. He signs away to another that for which he toiled, and in which his soul was bound up, and he knows not whether it be to a fool or to a wise man.

*Rank* is another flower which turns to decay in the hand which holds it. Never do the titles of rank seem more misplaced, than when he who wears them lies pining on a bed of sickness. Even the haughty Elizabeth checked the attendant who applied to her, in the time of her last affliction, the empty, high sounding titles of royalty. There is in Isaiah a singular description of the death of the King of Babylon. All the mighty dead, the chief ones of the earth, are represented as rising from their resting places, and while they look upon him with a ghastly grin they address him thus:—"Art thou also become weak as we are; art thou become like unto us; thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy vials; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Saladin, before he expired, ordered his winding sheet to be carried as a standard through every street of the city, while a crier went before and proclaimed, "This is all that remains to the mighty Saladin, the conqueror of the East."

Men and brethren, let us lay these things to heart. Come with me to the grave, as to a school of wisdom. From these bones which are scattered around the grave's devouring mouth, select one; take that skull, with its hollow eye-holes, and tell me the history of him whose busy mind it once enclosed. Was he a beggar or a rich man? Was he honoured or neglected? Did he spend his days in health or in sick-

ness? Did he live in a hovel or in a palace? You cannot tell, and it matters not. These distinctions have no place here. The only question which now avails is this, Did he die a saint or a sinner? Was he a believer in Christ, or a neglecter of Christ's salvation?

O, my friends, "put yourselves often into your graves, and look from thence out upon the world." Realize that hour, when the last struggle shall come upon you, and when your relations shall assemble by your bed-side to witness your departure. Anticipate that day when the mourners shall assemble, when you shall be borne forth from the land of the living, and be laid low among the dead; when the earth shall cover you, and the last mourner shall leave your grave. When that day comes, and come it will, and who knows how soon, what will earthly pursuits or worldly glory profit you? Will it profit you then to have it said that you enjoyed a life of health—that you delighted others by the sparkling brightness of your talents—that you mingled with men of high rank, or that you died with so much wealth. Value yourself on that which is truly valuable. It is faith, or the want of it, which will fix your fate for ever.

III. But here you have stability in the midst of motion—endurance in the midst of change. The first part of my text has led us to meditate among the tombs—the second raises our eyes to heaven. The first part speaks of death—the second of immortality. "*The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.*"

1st, *Amid the world's successive changes, the Gospel has remained, and will remain the same.*—Generation has succeeded generation, but one Gospel has gladdened them all. The Word of God, even the Gospel of our salvation, has ever been, amid the changing scenes of earth, like a rock, planting its firm base, and raising its rugged head amid the fluctuating waters of the sea. Adam heard its sweet sounds amid the trees of the garden, and it brought him the glad tidings, that the blessedness which he had lost would be restored by another. Abraham saw the Gospel day afar off and was glad. The Prophets, in long succession, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. John the Baptist preached this gospel, and the words of the Apostles of our Lord exhibit it in its completed fulness. It is "the common salvation." It will extend from Adam to his youngest son.

This is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you; and if we are to be saved at all, it must become even now the Gospel of our salvation. A few years will produce a change in this place where we are now assembled. This new building will assume the appearance of a time-hallowed edifice; its wood and its walls will bear the marks of passing

years. Another preacher will occupy the pulpit—another congregation will occupy the pews—a December sun will cast the shadows of the tombstones of the men of this generation on the withered grass—but, while we lie in the silence of the grave, the same doctrine which you now hear will be preached for a testimony to those who will come after us.

*2d, The heart impressions produced by the Word of the Lord will abide for ever.*—What saith the Apostle? “We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Yes, my fellow-men, the seed of regeneration, when it takes root in the heart, will outlive death. It will remain incorruptible amid the corruptions of the grave. Your immortal spirit will have enstamped upon it the abiding features of a moral change; for, wonderful expression! you have become “*partakers of the Divine nature!*” If you have put on those robes which have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, you have put on the robes which you will wear in heaven. These are the garments of eternity. If you have experienced the sanctification of the Spirit, the “*beauties of holiness,*” which, by the effectual working of this grace, are now but dimly pencilled on your soul, will be perfected and perpetuated in glory.

An eminent painter once said, when bringing all the skill of his art to bear upon the picture which was before him, “*I paint for posterity.*” Every minister of the sanctuary can adopt this higher tone—“*We labour for eternity.*” The Gospel which we preach will be either “*the savour of death unto death or of life unto life.*” After all earthly things shall have passed away as a tale which is told, divine things shall remain imperishable. Write upon the sand when the tide is at its ebb, print deep your characters; return after the tide has flowed, and you will find no trace of all that you did, for the rolling waves have effaced your work. Engrave upon the solid rock which the sea washes, and after tide has followed tide revisit that rock; and there you will see the manifest impress of what you had formed. So is it with earthly and divine things. Earthly things speak to the eye and to the flesh—to senses which are perishing; heavenly things speak to the soul, which has received immortality from the Father of our spirits, and which will retain on its enduring substance the impressions which the word of the Lord communicates.

*3d, The Word of God will be a subject of delightful study in heaven or a source of stinging reflection in hell.*—“The words that I speak unto you,” said Christ, “they are spirit and they are life.” In this book there are subjects of meditation even for heavenly spirits. The angels are learners from its contents. One of the exercises of heaven will be to look deeper into the mysteries which it discloses—to admire the grandeur of its doctrines, and the purity of its statutes, and the

hidden wisdom of its plan. The earth and the works of it shall be burnt up, but this blessed book shall escape the general conflagration. It will be preserved by the Spirit who gave it, and in the spirits of those who received it. You will not then require the help of that favourite Bible, whose well-read pages have often yielded you comfort, and whose form, and type, and page, are now so familiar to your eye and to your memory. God's Word will then be stereotyped on your soul, and, without a figure, its sacred sentences will be "spirit and life."

If the Word of God will be the subject of pleasing study in heaven, it will also be the source of stinging misery in hell. Equally will the Word of the Lord endure there for ever. Its free invitations—its faithful warnings—will be read in the light of hell. Every time that memory will suggest the well-known words of the Bible, which so often on earth resounded in the ear, so often will the lost spirit utter the cry of misery; so often will it break forth in the wailing of despair, "O that I had embraced, in the day of salvation, these offers of mercy!"

Brethren, you see that saving impressions are abiding impressions. It is not the transitory effect which a solemn sermon or communion season awakens, that we must mistake for the power of godliness. Our Lord spoke a parable regarding the impressions which the preaching of the Gospel produces upon various classes of hearers; and out of the four classes into which he divided the hearers of the Gospel, there is only one in which "the Word of God endureth," and leads to abiding results. There is only one, out of four, in which the seed takes heart-root. What room for holy jealousy, lest we mistake the surface-ruffings which natural causes produce, and which soon pass away, for the deep and abiding emotions of soul, which are inwrought when the Word comes in demonstration of the Spirit and with power! Listen, my hearers, to the Word of God—to the resolution which he forms regarding those who are the subjects of but momentary impressions. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth."

Nature is now seconding the lesson which the Word of God has been addressing to you. The voice of the departing year, sighing through the leafless branches, and blowing over withered fields, repeats with increasing pathos the words of my text—"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

## SERMON XXXV.

ISAIAH'S VISION OF CHRIST'S GLORY.

BY THE REV. J. J. BONAR, GREENOCK.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a tail-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."—ISAIAH vi. 1-13.

The king under whom Isaiah has hitherto prophesied is dead (v. 1), and, in all likelihood, he is cast down by that event. In this frame he repairs to "the temple" (v. 1), that he may pour out his laden soul, and takes his place (v. 6) hard by "the altar." But the temple is Christ—the altar Christ—the blood Christ—the very ashes are Christ; and as Christ thus meets his view, in all his sufferings and in all his love, peace would visit the afflicted saint again. O there is no relief for an anxious soul, no balm for a wounded soul, no light for a sad and gloomy soul, but Jesus!

Thus revived, Isaiah might now be thinking, Ah! how precious is such consolation! This is all I needed—let me be going. Jesus, however, knew better what his servant must require for his pilgrimage and mission; and ere, therefore, he suffers him to depart, he vouchsafes to him a special vision, and intrusts him with a special message. "It is good, then, to draw near unto God" with all our complaints, for he not only will take off our burdens—he loads us with tender mercies. Even though at his footstool, we may not know what to ask for; we can only, it may be, groan, and lie prostrate, like Isaiah. But our case is not hid from our God, and the measure of his grace will be according to the extent of our need.

No. 36.—SER. 35.

The prophet is at "the altar," but from "the altar" he looks, we imagine, with an earnest, farewell glance, before he quits the temple, towards the veil that shuts in the mercy-seat. Suddenly the veil is drawn aside, and the holy of holies disclosed. Isaiah still is in the flesh—he still leans against the altar. Yet, in a moment, as there he stands—a mortal man—a guilty man—he is introduced amid all the glories of heaven. *He saw a throne!* the very seat from which the laws of the universe are issued and its interests administered. He "saw the throne" "so glorious and high from the beginning," and that is "set above all the stars of God." He "saw the throne" at which devils heard their sentence, and before which quick and dead shall yet assemble. He "saw the throne" of heaven—the throne of God. *It was high and lifted up!*—"high" beyond all conception—"lifted up" above the seats of angels. Immeasurably was it elevated, alike in its dazzling holiness, and majestic grandeur, and resistless sway. In a vision, strictly parallel, of John, (Revelation iv.) it is added, *there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald!* the emblem, then, of the Mediatorial Covenant—the symbol of redeeming peace. "*The rainbow*" encircled the throne; and among its vivid colours it was "*the emerald*"—the laurel green of victory—that shone with intensest splendour, to let the universe know that this was the throne of a Conqueror as well as of a King—of a conqueror, too, who had returned from all his fields, and sat down to rule the empire he had won. *Above it stood the seraphim!* not angels merely; for in the equivalent vision of the Apocalypse (iv.) these beings with "the six wings," who sing so rapturously of a holy God, are the representatives of the ransomed Church. Yet, along with these glorious "existences," stand all the hosts of God, pure, brilliant, and unwearied, as flames of light.

O what a throne! Its *position* glorious—heaven itself; its *elevation* glorious—beyond all height; its *armorial bearings* glorious—the symbols of conquest; its *retinue* glorious—all bright and holy ones! But "the throne" was occupied, and He who occupied it is *sitting!* He exhibits the attitude of calm repose, and transcendent superiority, and unassailed omnipotence. He "*sits*" as a Warrior to rest, as a Monarch to survey, as a Judge to rule and govern. From his shoulders hung a robe magnificently wrought, *for the skirts of it filled the temple!* And though we are not told what its texture and appearance were, doubtless it was a robe of unsullied purity and amazing lustre—a robe, also, that made Him who wore it conspicuous to all around, and raised their ideas of his exalted perfection. But, as thus the hosts of heaven looked upon the throne, and Him who "sat" on it, they made haste and worshipped. As they gazed upon the bright throne, and its still brighter occupant,

they raised "*their wings before their face*" (v. 2), and seraph sang to seraph (v. 3) until heaven is one surge of melodious praise. God now enters upon the scene, and the prophet knows that He who "sits upon the throne" is Jehovah. Scarce have "the seraphim" begun their halleluiahs, when the heavens are rent at the presence of the Lord; the gates of the temple (v. 4) are shaken to make way for the Everlasting; and, in a moment, *the house is filled with smoke* (v. 4)—the symbol and assurance that God is there.

He who "sat upon the throne" Isaiah saw, is accordingly none other than God himself. But in his Gospel (xii. 41) John tells us, "*these things said Esaias when he saw Christ's glory and spake of HIM.*" He, therefore, whom Isaiah beheld in his vision was just the Church's head—the believer's surety—the sinner's friend! None other was he than "the man of sorrows"—the weeper in Gethsemane—the thirster on the cross—Jesus of Nazareth! Return, then, to the vision, and mark the glory it sheds upon Emanuel. Look again at "the throne" Isaiah gazed on; it is the throne of Jesus. "High is it, and lifted up," because Jesus is "gone far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." It is adorned with "the emerald"-wreath of victory,—for Jesus has "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." "He is sitting," inasmuch as "this Man, after he had offered the one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." All the hosts of God keep guard around him, for "when he bringeth his first-begotten into the word, he saith, Let all the angels worship him." He is "clothed, too, with a vesture dipped in blood; whilst he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." And, finally, behold how every knee is homage—every lip is praise—where Jesus sits, for "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

It was God whom Isaiah saw—it was God whom all the host of heaven worshipped—it was God who sat upon the throne so lofty, so white, so radiant; but it was God in my nature—God in the flesh of man. And, if it be further asked, to what period of Emanuel's history the vision belongs? we would say, that the prophet saw him at the time when, "having purged our sins, he went on high, and sat down at the right hand of the majesty of God." Once there was a man on earth who had the form of "a servant," and was "without any comeliness for which he



might be desired." That was Jesus ! But now he has dipped his raiment in the sun, "and is clothed with these royal garments down to the feet." Once a mob surrounded a helpless prisoner, and cried, "Crucify, crucify !" That was Jesus ! But now, "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Once they took a man, and plaited a fillet of sharp thorns for his diadem, and pressed it cruelly upon his temples. That was Jesus ! But "on his head now are many crowns." Once they hung a man upon a cross, and great was his shame, and awful his agony. That was Jesus ! But "now honour and majesty are before him—strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." Once a man went down, not merely to the grave, "but descended into the lower parts of the earth." That was Jesus ! But now "he has ascended up, far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." At Isaiah's date, Jesus, it is true, had neither been manifested nor slain—far less exalted. Nevertheless, the vision *anticipates* all events connected with him ; and, conducting us amidst the heavens after that the Son of God has returned thither, shews us the man of grief and conflict, now "the only potentate." Our Lord has been to earth—he has been at Bethlehem—in the wilderness—in the garden—on the cross ! but in the very flesh in which he contended and vanquished, has he entered again within the veil, "to reign before his ancients gloriously !"

What a Saviour, then, is our Saviour ! "His visage was so marred—more than any man—and his form more than the sons of men ;" but, "behold my servant ! he has prospered, and so shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high." Men and brethren, look and wonder ! The green earth, lying under the rays of evening, is beautiful—the still waters, gliding in sweet murmurs to the deep, are pleasant—the stars at midnight are glorious in their very silence. What more bright or more sublime than the sun, when it prepares to run, like a bridegroom, its race ? Yet in all these is there no beauty, no sweetness, no lustre, compared to what beams forth from the man Christ Jesus "sitting on his throne !" Most lovely is the world to you—most excellent all the world contains—however on your lips !—how near your heart ! But, Oh ! if once the soul has had a view of Christ in his gloriousness, *there* only will its eye rest. There, in one surpassing beam, blaze all the rays of the infinite, supreme, eternal, holy Godhead ; and we cannot help exclaiming with David, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth who hast set thy glory *above* the heavens." Let us, however, examine the manner in which they who actually saw the vision we have been describing were affected by it ; and this will best shew us at once its consummate splendour and the sentiments it should awaken.

I. It was seen by angels and the "spirits of the just made perfect," *in the first place*, and how were these affected?

1st, *They were astonished*.—It is nowhere said that the inhabitants of heaven cannot look upon God. But, speaking of little children, Jesus expressly says, on the contrary, "that their angels do always behold the face of my Father." No sooner, however, is God incarnate seen above—no sooner is "the Lamb as it was slain beheld in the midst of the throne"—than all the heirs of glory "cover" their amazed "faces" (v. 2) and hide their very "feet." "Great, then, must be the mystery of godliness,"—"God manifest in flesh," "received up into glory,"—when over it even the hosts of heaven do wonder. And though many around can pass it heedlessly by, O let us ever bear on mind that, whatever men on earth may do, all the worshippers before the throne are stooping over this scene, without cessation, as worth an eternity of thought.

2. *They were filled with joy*. And why? Even because God has manifested himself as "the holy God," in a way the most affecting to the universe, and set means, at the same time, on foot, which are to result (v. 3) in filling this eclipsed and polluted earth once more with his "glory." Oh! never was there such a demonstration given of essential holiness and spotless rectitude, as when God "laid upon his Son our iniquity," and "bruised him" under the terrors of all his wrath. But now that it is made clear, that he is just and pure, even though he takes sinners back, God's mercy has free course amongst this shamed and writhing world; and so deep, so broad is the stream, "that the whole earth (v. 3) is full of it." Love is now the manifested "glory" of Jehovah, even as it always has been his hidden delight. And as thus, in full consistency with every claim of righteousness, love visits, floods the earth, heaven rejoices! Ah! these pure beings think it not enough that God should be gracious. It is because his grace runs in the channel of justice, that they are so prompt to celebrate it. And if any be reckoning on the goodness of God coming by another way—by any way save the blood of a crucified Saviour, their hope shall go out in sudden darkness. Yet it is a glad truth, indeed, that in Jesus "righteousness and peace have met together," and that over all this world, where sinners dwell, there rests the sunshine of holy love.

3. *They celebrate it with songs*—for "one cried (v. 3) unto another." O what a song—a song, the theme of which is Jesus—a song that is raised by seraphim and saints—a song, the very echoes of which made earth to shake—a song that is pleasing in his ears who sitteth on the throne! But if in heaven they thus "sing the song of the Lamb," and never weary, shall we, upon the footstool, not catch their spirit, and send back their note? Friend of the Lamb! "remember his love more

than wine—sing forth the honour of his name—make his praise glorious.” Sinner! thou carest not for Christ—thou canst not bear Christ. What then could heaven be to thee? Heaven is full of Christ, and there all eyes look to Him—all hearts delight in him—all tongues glorify Him. Not one spot is there where Christ is not—not one spot is there, then, over all the region of blessedness, where thou mayest find an associate—where thou canst be happy.

4. *They were ready to advance the cause of redemption*—for “with their wings they were ready to fly.” O generous hosts of God! Ye are like Christ. The same mind that led him to forsake his Father’s bosom is in you. Rather will ye come to earth than remain in heaven, if sinners may be won. Ever might ye have gazed upon the throne, and rung out a more impassioned anthem, to Him who sits thereon, yet, constrained by our wretchedness, and the example of Him, who for the same wretchedness bowed his head in death, ye poise your flight for our world, and prepare to “minister to the heirs of salvation.” Believer! that’s your standard—mark your course—press forward with the banner of salvation. Ye have not wings. Yes! ye have—the wings of faith and prayer—fly, haste, and fly upon these mighty pinions, and give them no rest, until all earth has heard of Him who came in his Father’s name to save us. It will indeed cost you more to be a missionary than it will cost an angel. But do not shrink, believer. Thou hast treasure to offer—even a message of forgiving love; thou hast power to offer—even victory over the world, the grave, and death; thou hast rank to offer—eternal life with angels, and the crown of glory. These are the gifts thou art to scatter amongst all in the name of Jesus, and every offer thou canst seal and ratify, in a manner angels cannot do—saying, and thus he loved *me*! O, then, refuse not to tread in the steps of angels. Go through the world as angels go. Be the sweetest consolation of your heart—the endless burden of your lips, even the song of angels, “the whole earth is full of his glory,” for “God is love!”

II. Let us, *in the second place*, understand from the experience of Isaiah, how believers are affected by the vision of our text.

1. *Isaiah was overwhelmed at the first*.—The hosts above looked on Christ as Man and Atoner, as well as King, and though astonished, were not afraid. The prophet, on the other hand, passing by the grand fact which arrested the eye of heaven, “saw the king (v. 5), the Lord of hosts,” in the dread “smoke” that filled the temple, and the dreder noise that shook its foundations. No wonder, then, that he quaked more than “the posts of the doors.” In himself he sees nothing but the dry stubble of guilt, and in God an insatiable fire approaching to

devour it. No wonder, then, that he cried out "undone!" For let any sinner thus view the God "with whom he has to do"—realize him only as a God, "round whose throne are clouds and darkness"—whose "voice breaketh the cedars of Lebanon"—and he, too, will cry out as "if hell were moved from beneath to meet him at his coming." Yet, what is betwixt the unconverted soul, and such consternation, such despair, such wrath, such a God? Nothing but life's weak, worn thread, which may this moment snap asunder, and thou art delivered, O wretched man, into the hands of the great Avenger.

The prophet was saddened, however, from another cause. He sees that even though he had a *title* to heaven, no *fitness* has he, neither those whom he loved. "His lips are unclean" (v. 5), and "unclean are the lips of those among whom he dwells." How, then, could either sing in the choir of the blessed, even though a golden harp were given them? That he longed for heaven, and wept because of friends and relatives still in their pollution, shewed a renewed mind in Isaiah. Nevertheless, as he thought of heaven's services so pure, and his own heart so alienated, he felt with lamentable certainty that for heaven he was not prepared. Yet would the prophet be more deeply concerned as he thought of those "among whom he dwelt," and with whom he daily met—the parent through whom he received his very life—a brother or sister who had been nursed at the same breast—the child of his prayers and hopes—the wife of his bosom—all "unclean of lip"—all estranged from God—all unfit for heaven. O it was this that wrung the sighs from his deepest soul! It was this that forced him to exclaim "woe is me!" How, then, unforgiven man, are you so calm, so happy? Your "lips" are dark with sin—iniquity reigns over your soul—a devil is as fit for heaven as you! And yet you are calm—and yet you are happy! O brother, look into thy heart, as there thou sittest, and tremble to think that heaven, wert thou entering it as thou art, would be but the consummation of thy wretchedness. Brother! even though safe yourself, have you no compassion for acquaintances and kindred—no bowels for relatives and friends—no tear, no sigh, no "woe is me" for mother, or father, or child, or wife, all "afar off"—all "without God"—all still dwelling in the city that is to be burned up with fire? O brother! when thou meetest thy family this night at God's altar, ask round, is there *one*, even *one* of all these, fit for heaven? Consider, brother, if they be not *all*—yes *all*—hastening to the chambers of death, and be ashamed and confounded, like the prophet, and mourn and weep.

2. *But the Prophet is immediately revived.*—Isaiah had already found Christ, though for a season he be in heaviness. Again, however,

the Spirit returns, and, by a fresh application of the work of redemption, relieves his entangled soul. 1st, Mark, first, "*Thy iniquity is taken away*," (v. 7). His guilt is blotted out, and a sense of pardon sealed anew upon his soul. 2d, Then, "*thy sin is purged*." Corruption has received a check, and holiness an impulse. 3d, Next, this sense of pardon, and assurance of holiness, are conveyed by the Holy Ghost, who is represented by "*the burning coal*," (v. 6), for his name elsewhere is "*the spirit of burning*." 4th, Further, "The burning coal is taken (v. 6) "*from the altar*"—inasmuch as the spirit proceeds from Christ, and bears witness of him. 5th, Finally, The vast work is done, and the vast change wrought in an instant—"lo! this hath touched thy lips, and *thine iniquity is taken away*!" No sooner is Christ brought near by the Holy Ghost, than every fetter falls off, and every cloud is dispelled. All is liberty and sunshine. O great salvation!—so complete—so instantaneous—so free! alike suitable, too, and near to him who hears of it for the first time, and those who, as Isaiah, had ceased to enjoy it. Man! it signifies not whether you are a backslider, or unconverted. On either supposition, you need salvation, and a salvation at once from guilt and defilement. And here is what you need. What can deliver you from wrath, and fit you for heaven—what will change your leopard spots, and crimson stains, save the blood of Jesus? But here it is, in all its boundless efficacy, and unrestricted offer, and immediate enjoyment. Were a seraph now seen flying towards us, as he did to Isaiah, would not every eye follow him as he left the opened sky, and would not every lip be presented for his touch, and would not our only fear be lest his "*coal should cease to burn*," ere he came to us? But amidst us is one higher than any seraph! The Spirit is hovering near with his blood-dipt "*hyssop*," and "*burning coal*." And if there be one among you not reconciled to God in righteousness this very moment, the blame is all his own. Men and brethren! what do I see? I see "*the burning coal from off the altar*" at your lips! There waits the Spirit with the blood of a finished atonement—the robe of spotless merit—all "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*." Hear ye deaf, and look ye blind, that ye may see! Yield, sinner, to him who "*speaks to thee from heaven*!" "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness!" Make haste to the City of Refuge—the manslayer has lifted up his javelin! "Quench not the Spirit," for he longs to make thy heart, even thine, his resting-place and temple. Receive Christ, O sinner, receive him as there thou sittest in all thy trespasses—and on that spot thy pardon shall be sealed—thy heart made meet for "*the inheritance of the saints in light*."

Being quickened, however, "*teach transgressors the way*," as did

Isaiah. Scarcely is the prophet recovered from his dismay, when he is called to active duty (v. 8.); for every soul Jesus receives into his fold, he sends into his vineyard. Indeed, every redeemed soul pants to be made use of, and has no greater delight than in telling about the Saviour who loved it. Act in this spirit, all ye who have found peace through Jesus. "Here am I; send me"—be this your language; and remember, that as the whole Trinity combined for your salvation, so by all the persons of the Godhead are you invited to proclaim their work of redeeming love—"Who will go for us?" Has Jesus died for me?—let me bring others to his grace. Has the Spirit healed me?—let me be "an epistle of holiness." Has the Father set his love on me from everlasting?—"let me love him who first loved me." O my brother, my sister, mark Isaiah's course, and, as he did, walk only with a view to the glory of God, and the redemption of souls, and the disclosures of eternity. Walk with "the cup of salvation" always in your hand, and present it to every lip. Walk among the dead, with life—among the sick, with healing—among the troubled, with hope—among the guilty, with pardon—among the evil, with rebuke—among the lost, as a spirit from the heavens, calm, unwearied, and holy. Be prophets in your own families, and drop the seeds of life now into the heart of your child, now into the bosom of your wife, now into the soul of your servants. Be witnesses unto the world. And protest not merely against its lusts, and pomps, and fashions. Testify unto it of Christ. Be standard-bearers in the Church, and in a day when many have forsaken Jesus, and more are ready to do so, "prefer Zion above your chiefest joy;" and, if by any means you can gather in her elect, say promptly, "Here am I; send me!"

III. We would now consider, *in the last place*, how the world is affected by the vision that Isaiah saw.

1. Isaiah had a glorious vision, and as glorious an experience, and with "the report" of this, the Lord sends him forth. He is to tell men of Christ—of Christ as seen by his eyes, and enjoyed by his heart. Isaiah's life is henceforth to be an epistle of gospel peace—a proclamation of forgiving love, O what a message, and what a messenger! Surely this "burning coal"—this altar-fire will kindle all the earth! Who can doubt, that when the love of a reconciled God is made known unto the sons of men, every sinner will exclaim, "Now is come salvation!"

Alas! Isaiah preaches—preaches the purest, the liveliest gospel; but they regard him not—they reject his message—they discredit his experience, until at the close of his ministry, he is forced, as one who had lost all his seed, to cry out, "Who hath believed *our* report?" Ah! not one.

Isaiah has walked through the streets of Jerusalem, and the cities of Judea, with all the riches of grace. He has wept, and groaned, and warned, and besought. Still no eye beholds a Saviour's beauty—no ear drinks in the Saviour's love—no heart has yielded to the Saviour's cross—"no one (v. 10) is convert—no one healed." Nay; and the heart is becoming more obdurate, and the mind grosser. Christ is still proclaimed in all his fulness—Christ is still commended in their synagogues—Christ is still, at home and abroad, pressed upon their notice, and all his blessings offered without money and without price. Christ is still shown to them as "the man of sorrows," and "the Lord of glory"—"the worm" of shame,—and the sinner on the throne—the mediator—the advocate—the judge. But it is all a dream—a crotchet. Formerly, Israel did not regard him, now they will not believe him; formerly, "their ears (v. 9) were heavy, now "they shut their eyes;" formerly, they "heard, but understood not," now "they see, but do not perceive." Dismal infatuation, when ignorance is mistaken for knowledge—and light is confounded with darkness—and a people persist in thinking they know Christ, though they know him not!

Yet such is the condition of many whom I now address. That same report which Isaiah announced to his countrymen, has been heard by you. That same vision which struck the prophet to the dust, have your eyes beheld. But ye are "deaf"—ye are "blind"—ye are "dead." You bear the name of Christ. But, Oh! is it not true, that to all the melody of a Saviour's grace, ye are deaf—to all the loveliness of a Saviour's beauty, ye are blind—to all the pathos of a Saviour's woe, ye are insensible—to all the attraction of a Saviour's glory, ye are dead? For *you*, the form of Jesus has no comeliness—his name no charm—his throne no solemnity nor terror. The idea of an angel has more influence over your mind than the thought of Jesus. A mere earthly monarch, travelling in pomp, through her empire, is a far more thrilling sight to you than "the brightness" of him on whom angels cannot look.

But is it possible to be thus at variance, in feeling and view, with all the saints of God on earth, and all his hosts above, yet know peace? Here is the point: either you or the inhabitants of heaven are wrong—seriously and eternally out of the way. If *you* are happy, then there is no bliss with saints and angels. But if saints and angels are happy, then *you* must be profoundly and for ever miserable. A man cannot drink out of "the cup of devils" and be satisfied, if those around the throne find rest by drinking from the cup of God. What say ye to this? Ah! you will not deny, that all with Christ are happy; your desire and hope is to join them in the end. But for them "to live in heaven, even as here," is Christ. Christ is their immortality and bliss. "All

their springs are in him." How, then, *can* you be ought but unutterably wretched? You may deny them—you may keep them under—you may remain ignorant of them; but all the sources of confusion, and disquietude, and wrath are within you. And the evil is getting worse day after day—sermon after sermon. Each time that "the report" of a Saviour is heard, but not accepted, you are just removed the **further** from his grace, and more deeply confirmed in opposition to his **reign**. Ah! beloved, much have you heard of Jesus—much have you heard of him at this time. If still you turn away your sight and eyes—if still you shut out the vision of the cross and the glory of the throne—if still you are left without any desire after the Son of Man, or comfort in his love—if still you see not Jesus, nor seek for Jesus, then, are your hearts more perverse now than when we entered this house. Unforgiven soul! thou canst resist more light—more warning—more love now than thou couldst have done when this Sabbath first broke. Yet, saddest plague, ye are not aware that this is your case. Still you are satisfied with yourselves—you are still at ease. But your satisfaction and your ease are the demonstration of what I say. They shew how iron is your insensibility—how gross your darkness. You are sinking fast into the arms of eternal death. Awake, then, sleeper even now—awake as there you sit and listen! There is mercy still, and hope, and salvation. O ye have trampled under foot the blood of the covenant—you have set at nought the Holy Ghost. With what chain has the devil not bound you? You are hanging over the pit. The next shriek that issues from the flames may be yours! *Yet even to this distance the Saviour of the lost pursues you, and gladly would he bring you home!* There stands Jesus! there waits the Spirit! And still they ask, beseechingly, "Why wilt thou die, Israelite?" "Why?"—"tell us why?" "I am guilty, and God would not suffer me to enter his presence—I am impure, and heaven would only be imprisonment and exile to me. O what a change must pass upon me—a change that will make me spotless in the eyes of God—a change that will prepare me for the society of the blessed. And who is sufficient for this—who can wash me, and cleanse me, and make me new?" Ah, sinner! none but Christ may do these great things—none but Christ. He has, however, made all things ready for our meeting God in peace, and spending eternity in bliss around the throne. Plant your foot, then, upon this rock—build your hope upon this foundation—cast your soul upon the Lamb. Hitherto have you trusted in yourself—now place Jesus under you as all your confidence—feel nothing but the cross between you and condemnation. Yes, even now, as the offer is pressed upon your acceptance—even now, whilst the words are on my lips—even now, "believe on the Lord Jesus



Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Had Jesus not purchased heaven, and all that heaven contains, by his death, you might have hesitated to "lay hold of life eternal." But now that "Christ has died, yea, rather has risen again," it is casting disdain upon his accepted work—distrust upon his most certain word—if you do not freely and instantly take from him all he offers, and "go on your way rejoicing."

2. Unrestricted, however, as this offer is, let me in faithfulness say, that by most, I am persuaded, it will be set at nought, and "the report" of Jesus become more and more despised, until judgment burst upon us. Because the gospel is much preached in these days, you deem your peril less, your chance better. Mistaken men! If there be a dark omen over Scotland at this moment, it is a *preached gospel*. Received, it would have exalted us to heaven!—rejected, it will sink us in Capernaum's doom! Look to our text (v. 11, 12), and be convinced that a despised Christ must hasten an avenging Christ. Yes! and he hastens. Even as the life of a tree which has retired to the root, when every branch is broken off, his elect (v. 13) shall be safe. But inasmuch as men will not now give heed in this the merciful day of their visitation, when "our God comes, it shall be very tempestuous round about him." We dream of human affairs as a tide, always swelling to a higher mark of prosperity—we see the world rolling forward on the wheels of time to unparalleled greatness, and stable felicity. Of all this, however, we have no hint in Scripture, not one sign over all the disc of Providence. But every thing points to a crisis, when God must say, "Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." Unconverted man! where wilt thou *then* be found? Softened, thinkest thou, and healed, and at the feet of Jesus at last? No; all the history of Israel, in terms of Isaiah's prophecy (v. 10), assures us that where the gospel has been set at nought, judgments only ensnare, and harden, and overthrow. Ah! thou who hatest Jesus now, when his wrath pours out its vials, thou wilt hate him all the more—thou wilt hate him with all thy heart—thou wilt hate him with a supreme and perfect hatred. And as a hater of Jesus thou shalt live and die. And as a hater of Jesus thou shalt stand at the Judgment-bar. And as a hater of Jesus thou shalt spend eternity! O crucifying thought! An eternal hater of him who died for us! An eternal hater of him whom all the host of heaven worship! An eternal hater of him whom the Father infinitely loves! O consummation of wickedness, and shame, and misery—an eternal hater of Jesus! "Kiss, then, the Son ere he be angry, and ye perish from the way; for within a little, his wrath shall blaze forth. Blessed only are they who have taken shelter under him!"

## SERMON XXXVI.

THE DUTY OF NATIONS TO THE CHURCH, AND THEIR DANGER IN  
NEGLECTING IT.

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"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nation shall be utterly wasted."—ISAIAH lx. 12.

FAMILIAR though the Jews must have been with the prophetic intimations of the wide extension, and universal prevalence of the Church of God, we cannot wonder that they should have regarded the fulfilment of these announcements as improbable, and have occasionally listened to them with a feeling approaching to incredulity. If even now, after all that has taken place in the preservation and increase of the Church, *we* sometimes feel it difficult to believe that all opposition to the cause of truth shall yet be crushed, and that all nations will yield a hearty and harmonious homage to the Saviour, it would surely have betokened no ordinary strength of faith, and no ordinary enlargement of mind in a Jew, to have contemplated, with stedfast hope, the realization of such prospects as were opened up to him in the present chapter. Shut up as the Church of God had hitherto been, within the narrow confines of Judea, and shackled as its worship was by national peculiarities, its extension to all lands must have been an idea which nothing less than a Divine assurance could have enabled him to entertain. So little also must this have seemed accordant with the state, both political and religious, to which the nation had been now reduced, that they could not fail to be astonished at the glowing descriptions of Isaiah; and when they listened to such predictions as these, "the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; thy gates shall be open continually, that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought,"—predictions that foreshowed an exaltation which their nation had not reached, even under the reigns of David and Solomon, we cannot wonder that there should have been awakened in their minds the anxious inquiry, "How can these things be?" As if anticipating this reception  
No. 37.—SER. 36.

to his announcement, Isaiah meets the question, by setting forth in our text the appropriate answer, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

This assertion of Divine judgments, as the means by which the Church's triumph should be achieved, was not made to the exclusion of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as another, and indeed as the chief, agency in bringing about this consummation. Not only do the Old Testament Scriptures abound with promises of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, but even in the chapter before us, His work, if not specifically mentioned, is evidently implied, as the fountain of those means by which the coming glories of the Church shall be realized. For, in the opening verses, it is declared, that the reflection from the Church of that "glory of the Lord" with which we know that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to irradiate her, will penetrate the "darkness that covers the earth," and attract the Gentiles toward her. But the Old Testament dispensation was not distinguished as the dispensation of the Spirit. The promises of His plentiful effusion, like the other promises of the Church's glory, were to be fulfilled under the New Testament economy. The Jews had, during the past history of their Church, been familiar with God's interposition on their behalf by judgment, rather than by grace; and, therefore, when the prophet's object is to confirm in their minds the hope of enlargement, he selects, of the two agencies by which this is to be effected, that one on which, from past experience, they would be likely the more easily to depend. Had he specified the other, their doubts would have been but little removed, for the employment of the means would have seemed to them as improbable as the end. We, on the other hand, who live under the dispensation of the Spirit, and know what changes He has already wrought, are more accustomed to refer the in-bringing of millennial glory to his agency on the hearts of men, than to Divine judgments on ungodly nations. And yet, whilst there is no doubt that the former is the more pleasing object of contemplation, there is just on this account a danger of indulging in it too exclusively, and thus of shutting ourselves out from the instruction and warning which God designed that we should receive from his so fully unfolding the prospect of the other. It is only when we regard the promises of his Spirit, in combination with the denunciations of his wrath, and thus give earnest heed to both departments of that word of prophecy, which God gave to be to his Church as "a light shining in a dark place," that we can expect to have an accurate view either of the Church's future destiny, or of her present duty.

The text presents to our notice two topics, *first*, The duty of nations; and, *secondly*, The punishment by which the neglect of this duty will

be avenged. The consideration of these may be subservient to the appreciation of our position and responsibilities as a Church of Christ.

I. Let us, *first*, consider what is here pointed out to be the duty of nations. The duty of nations is to *serve the Church*. This is not simply, as some are guilty of carelessly interpreting this verse, to serve Christ. It is undoubtedly true, that nations are bound to serve Christ—that this duty is frequently inculcated in Holy Scriptures—and that, to serve Christ, may, on account of the close union between him and his Church, be substantially the same thing as to serve the Church. But you will observe that it is the Church which is addressed throughout this chapter, and to which, consequently, in this verse also the prophet's discourse is directed. And it is under the *form*, at least, of *serving her*, that the duty of nations is represented—"The nation and kingdom that will not serve *thee*." The standing which nations are appointed to occupy in relation to the Church, is herein indicated. And one mode, at least, in which they must discharge themselves of their duty to Christ, is specified to be, *serving his Church*.

But what is the precise duty which is here devolved upon nations? What is it for them to serve the Church? In answer to this, I remark,

1st, That the expression does not imply the supremacy of the Church over the State. It is very plain that it cannot denote the subjection of nations to the Church *in things temporal*. No control or power in these things is assigned to the Church. Scripture represents her authority as exercised only in spiritual matters. And for a testimony to her of her Master's will on this point, our Saviour put from him the request that he would arbitrate in a civil question, by the remark, "Who made me a judge and a divider over you?" It is equally plain that the text does not ascribe to the Church a dominion over the State *in things spiritual*. She is forbidden to dictate to the consciences of men. "Not for that," says the Apostle (2 Cor. i. 24), "we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." She has no power to control either the faith or the conduct of men in spiritual things. She and they are equally placed under the authority of God's Word, and both are directly addressed by it. Nations are bound to listen to its voice, and are freed from all obstructions either in hearing or obeying its messages. When walking most closely by the Word, they are the most certain to serve the Church. The Church, again, that is most truly the Church of Christ, and knows the best her own privileges, will be the most careful in acknowledging the liberty of the nations.

2d, If the expression does not ascribe to the Church any control over the State, it still more clearly forbids the idea that the State may exer-

cise control over the Church. This, indeed, if it were at all permitted, would be to reverse the statement of the text, and to make out the line of duty to be, not that nations should serve the Church, but that the Church should serve the nations of the earth. Whatever subjection the Church, both collectively and in her individual members, may give the State in civil things, she is not only free from this subjection in spiritual matters—that is, in all those things in which she is a church—in all those matters in which her being as a Church consists—but is warranted to expect and to claim the service of the State. Not only will the fulfilment of the prediction in the text “make an end of the Erastian controversy,”\*—the mere announcement should have prevented its rise.

3d, In order to the discharge of the duty here specified, it is evidently implied that nations must ascertain which is the Church of Christ—must know her as distinguished from all other societies and all false churches. It is scarcely necessary to remark, what has indeed been already taken for granted, and what is plainly implied throughout the whole chapter, that nations are here spoken of as nations, acting in their collective capacity, and discharging this duty in the same way in which they perform any other national act. If the Church is here spoken of as a society, it is plain that nations are also spoken of as societies, and not with reference merely to the separate individuals of whom they are composed. If God knows how to destroy nations, without destroying the individuals of whom they consist, it is plain that he has provided a way in which not the separate individuals merely, but the collective body may both ascertain and obey his will. Accordingly, it is not enough that they serve what they understand or declare to be the Church of Christ. They may have adopted it and declared it to be the Church, not because its principles are most closely in unison with the will of Christ, or because it will best abide the test of the Word of God, but because its character is most in accordance with their own will, and its principles seem most consistent with their own safety. If they proceed upon this principle, they cannot fail to mistake, or, it may be, deliberately to reject, the Church of God; for it is just because its principles are repugnant to the world, and are not in accordance with carnal wisdom or human policy, that it is marked out as the Church that is pre-eminently and exclusively entitled to the service of the nations. Unless they surrender themselves to the guidance of the Scriptures, and judge of the Church by the pattern exhibited there, they may be most sedulous and reverential in doing homage to what they look on as the Church; but all the while they may be merely doing homage to a human institution—a State-created society—and not serving nor acknowledging that which

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\* Gillespie's Aaron's Rod.

God has stamped with the characteristics of his Church, and those who in God's eyes are truly and exclusively his people.

4th. Having ascertained which is the true Church of Christ, in what way are nations to follow up this by *serving her*? The chapter before us, descriptive as it is of the Church's most prosperous state, informs us by what acts and services this duty is to be discharged. (1.) They are to acknowledge and recognise her as the Church of Christ; they are to forbear persecution and reproach; they are no longer to decry her as a mere human society, or to claim her as a creature of the State, but to admit her character and standing as the Bride of the Lord. "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (v. 14.) (2.) Next, it is more especially pointed out, and more frequently insisted on, that the service of nations is to consist in ministering to her of their wealth, and furnishing or endowing her with pecuniary means for the work and service of the Lord. For what else can be meant by such expressions as these,—“the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee; all they from Sheba shall bring gold and incense; all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings; for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver.” (3.) Still farther, it follows from all this, that nations are bound to serve the Church, by affording her every facility for the work of Christ and by carefully avoiding to place any obstruction in the way, either of her promoting her own purity, or extending the knowledge of the Gospel. This, indeed, is not so distinctly stated as the particulars already mentioned, unless we consider it to be implied in the promise, “I will make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness,”—probably because the prophecy refers to the time when the work of extending the Gospel Church shall be completed, when there will be no need of this special part of service, as well as no fear of its being lacking if it be required. But at present, while there is scope for its being rendered, it is most important to be remarked, that those who really honour the Church of Christ, and intelligently and willingly contribute of their substance to her service, are sure heartily to lend all their assistance in furtherance of the work to which she is ordained; and that nations really intent on serving her, will be in a state of such entire subjection to the Word of God, and so animated by his Spirit, that all their laws and all their power will be consecrated to the cause of

Christ, so as not to traverse but to harmonise with and help forward every scriptural effort and aim of the Church.

Such is the service which it is the duty of nations to render to the Church. And it cannot escape observation, how very different a view is thus given us of the position of the Church from that which prevails in the world. How frequently has the idea been propounded, and how commonly is it applauded for its justice and felicity, that the Church is the handmaid of the State—the moral police—the most effective servant of the nation! Kings and parliaments are spoken of as doing some great thing, when they bestow on her any notice or countenance; and to acknowledge her services is, on their part, performing an act of wondrous condescension! Ah, how different is the light which Scripture casts on her relation to the nations of the earth! She is the superior; they are the servants and the subjects. Whatever their splendour and greatness may be, she is presented to us as irradiated with a much higher glory, and, in reality, occupying a more elevated place. Their appropriate and most honourable attitude is, not that of looking down upon her with commendation and complacency, but that of looking up to her with profoundest reverence—of “bowing themselves down at the soles of her feet.” Their duty to her is, not the bestowing of alms on a beggar, or the payment of wages to a servant, or the recompensing of benefits to a friend, but the rendering of tribute to whom tribute is due. On their “serving” her, their destiny is suspended, and it is only by doing her homage, that they can purchase their preservation.

This leads us to notice,

II. *Secondly*, The punishment by which the neglect of this duty shall be avenged. “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee *shall perish*; yea, those kingdoms shall be *utterly wasted*.”

The whole chapter evidently points to a period still future, and consequently this prediction still waits for its fulfilment. But because the principles of the Divine administration are unchangeable, and characterize his operations equally on a smaller as on a larger scale; and because, accordingly, those principles which will distinguish his dealings towards the Church *then*, can be none other than what have regulated all his dealings towards her in the past, we may gather from her history many impressive evidences of the certainty with which we may count upon this threatening’s being executed, and many solemnizing illustrations of the manner in which we may expect that the judgment will be inflicted. Of the *certainty* with which the predicted vengeance will finally fall on the Church’s enemies, we have the plainest evidence, not only in his “rebuking kings for her sake,” but in the literal fulfilment

of the threat, the *utter wasting* of the kingdoms that slighted or oppressed her. Egypt, for instance, long had within its borders the tribes of Jacob,—the whole Church of God that then was; but instead of serving, it oppressed them, and refused to let them go: and, as is expressly stated, in punishment of that proud nation's treatment of his heritage, God visited every dwelling of its people with death, and overwhelmed its king, and princes, and armies with the waters of the Red Sea. Babylon was first the invader and then the master of Judah, and, though in this it was the specially appointed rod of the Almighty's anger, and only inflicted the destined chastisement on his disobedient people, yet his displeasure was awakened by its neglect of their welfare, and it too was "utterly wasted." "I am very sore displeased," it is said (Zech. i. 15), "with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased," that is, with the Jews, "and they helped forward the affliction." Tyre had exulted over the disgrace and captivity of Judah; and, therefore (Ezek. xxvi. 2, 3), though it was the "crowning city" of the earth, whose "antiquity had been of ancient days"—"whose merchants were princes, and her traffickers the honourable of the earth,"—it was, in God's stern vindication of his people's prerogatives, made a spoil to the nations. Coming still farther down, we find even in New Testament times, the same principle imprinted on the Divine procedure. The Jews rejected Jesus, and refused to redeem the time of their probation, by acknowledging his disciples as now the Church of God, and yielding to it the appropriate homage; and, in consequence thereof, they were themselves rejected, and their nation and their city desolated. Rome, too, persecuted instead of serving the Church; and, therefore, though she had been deemed proof against destruction and decay—though her poets had predicted that her empire would be eternal, and even to the eye of inspiration she had appeared to be "strong exceedingly," yet she was shivered into fragments, and all her glory levelled with the dust. And not to particularize more or later instances, what has been the fate of Ephesus, and Sardis, and Thyatira, and Corinth—places which, though figuring less conspicuously on the page of history, yet all had a day of merciful visitation—all had the gospel of Christ preached, and the Church of the living God erected in them? They, too, are set forth as ensamples of Divine vengeance, and on their desolation may be seen, indelibly written by the finger of Providence, the emphatic declaration, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted."

What God has wrought in these several and isolated cases, he will yet accomplish on a scale of more appalling magnificence, when all the earth shall be the scene of vengeance, and many nations shall, at one



moment, have the cup of trembling put into their hands. In those, as specimens of his power, and as illustrations of the surpassing love which he bears his Church, he forewarns us, that in order to consummating her glory, and accomplishing his gracious purposes towards her, he will not forbear to overturn every obstacle. "The Gospel of the kingdom will first be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, and, then shall the end come,"—the end of their probation—the end at once of affliction to those by whom it is received, and of long-suffering to those by whom it is rejected. By their treatment of his Gospel, by their conduct towards his Church, is he to test them and fix their destiny. Nor, observe, is it needful, in order to a nation's entailing on itself heaven's desolating curse, that it engage in actual persecution of the Church. It may be—nay, it very probably will be—the case, that such will at that time be the vigour and spirituality of the Church in every land, that no other alternative will be possible to any nation, than either assailing it with open hostility, or rendering it devoted service—that they who are not attracted by its heavenly lustre, will not be able to repress their bitter enmity. But, however that may be, it is not necessary to suppose that it *must* be, in order to the universal application of the test presented in our text. For not the persecution of the Church alone, the mere refusal to serve her, will suffice to bring a nation within the strictly defined range of Heaven's doom. And who is there that does not see exemplified, how far short a nation may come of the crime of national persecution, and yet incur the guilt which the text denounces? To neglect to forward the interests of the Church of God, to create obstructions, or even to refuse countenance, to her exertions for saving souls—this is for a nation to expose itself to vengeance. It may endow error; it may give special facilities for its propagation and perpetuity; it may cast down the bulwarks of the Sabbath's sacredness, and authorize its profanation; it may, in many nameless ways, smile on vice, and diffuse the taint of irreligious feeling throughout all departments of its service; and in doing these things it takes its place in the ranks of the enemies of God, and occupies the very ground over which his wrath impends. For God does not know neutrality to his cause among nations any more than among individuals. "He that is not with us is against us." He demands an undivided allegiance, and spurns all attempted compromise. The kingdom which he has set up must possess the whole earth. It will brook no compeer. The kingdoms that will not become one with it, it will consume and break in pieces.

We know, then, that the Church's millenium will not be brought about simply by the peaceful operation of the Spirit in the hearts of men, but will be ushered in amidst "distress of nations with perplexity."

On the *manner* in which Divine vengeance will be executed, as has been already remarked, considerable light is shed from God's dealings in the past, but we may be well content to leave it to his unerring Providence. Enough be it for us to know, that, as on former occasions, he has not wanted, so still he has ample resources in store for the accomplishment of all his purposes. Of this we may be thoroughly assured, that the Church will prove to every land, as has been well said, "either the spring of its mercies, or the cause of its destruction." "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks; who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." (Micah v. 8.) Not, indeed, as if, in order to the destruction of her enemies, the Church were to lift the sword, and mingle in the battle. Such is not her warfare; nor is the battle-field the place that she will occupy. Nor will she be needed there. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of her." Nations, ignorant of the power or the reality of God's presence with his Church, have often considered merely her outward state, and, contrasting her apparent strength with their own, have concluded that they would easily destroy her, and that, in assailing her, they could incur no danger. How often has it been thought, and even boastfully proclaimed, that she must yield, without a serious struggle, as much of her principles and profession as the powers of this world demand! This same imagination will, we know from the sure word of prophecy, instigate them in those final assaults which will end in their destruction. They will say (Ezek. xxxviii. 11), "I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil and to take a prey." Deceived by such imaginations, they will be ripened for their ruin, and led to their predicted punishment. For God, in order to confirm his people's confidence, has given intimation of the very means of their enemies' destruction, and revealed to us that they shall fall, like the hosts of Midian, by one another's hands, or be overthrown, like Egypt, by direct and immediate, though not equally miraculous, interpositions of the Almighty arm. "I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God; every man's hand shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord." Ezek. xxviii. 21-23. The hour of their most

confident exultation will be the prelude of their final overthrow, and of the church's complete deliverance.

If such, then, be the prospects of the nations—if not one of them can escape destruction save on the condition here specified—how entirely ought we even to forget the sure and glorious destiny that awaits the Church, in the anxiety with which we ought to be filled, faithfully to discharge the duty which, as the Church of Christ, we owe to the benighted and sinful nations of the earth? For how shall they be enlightened to know where safety is to be found, save through our instrumentality? The Church is God's ordained and chosen means for the conversion of souls—for the salvation of the world. From her must go forth the power that will subdue, and the knowledge that will illumine, and the peace that will adorn the farthest outskirts of disordered humanity. Oh! we do well to send them bibles, and ministers, to ply them with gospel offers and opportunities. For how can they believe without hearing, and how can they hear without a preacher? But it is a very solemn thought, that all these means and ordinances may only ripen them for vengeance—may be only the preaching of the gospel “for a witness,”—a witness to the righteousness of their condemnation—a witness to their having had the offer of Christ, and rejected him—to their having had gospel opportunities, and misimproved them. The preaching of the gospel is not always “a savour of life unto life;” it is often a “savour of death unto death.” It is only the Spirit who can give the Word a saving efficacy. It is in vain, therefore, for us to send bibles and ministers for the salvation of souls, unless the Spirit be sent along with them. And how can we send the Spirit? Have we power to command his operations? Yes; God has given this power to men. Prayer is the means, the only means of bringing down the Spirit. What need, then—what urgent, instant need, that we pray for the outpouring of the Spirit on every land of gospel privilege on earth? We leave our duty but half-performed, if we do not follow missionaries and bibles with prayer—unceasing, earnest prayer. God may, indeed, in his sovereign grace, send forth the Spirit in converting efficacy, irrespective of our prayerlessness, and he may make the bibles and the missionaries that have been sent forth by prayerless men, “the savour of life unto life;” but, besides that this does not alter the obligation under which he has laid us,—it is an expectation which we are not warranted to entertain. For, whilst he promises that the Spirit shall be outpoured in more abundant measure than the Church has yet experienced, he adds, “yet for this will I be enquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them.” What strong encouragement to prayer for the Spirit do such promises contain! How indispensable the necessity for

it which they teach ! And how urgently should we feel impelled by this necessity, inasmuch especially as we see the day approaching, when the storm of Divine fury, long restrained, shall be let loose, and when the end shall be.

Still farther, having before our eyes the solemn denunciation of the text, let us learn the duty, which, as the Church of Christ, we owe to our own nation.

It is unnecessary for me to prove, that, as a nation, we have committed the very sin here denounced, or to remind you that it has been committed with special bearing on ourselves, as a Church of Christ, in our relation to the State. But it is not simply to its dealings with us, to its assertion of a right to occupy the throne in Zion on which the Redeemer sits, and its refusal to continue ministering to us of its wealth, save on the condition of our no longer being the Church of Christ, but being professedly and practically "the creature of the State"—it is not to this alone, heinous though it be, that the commission of this sin has been confined. I need not point out how the claim to control, and the refusal to serve the church, has, with sad consistency, been preceded and accompanied by ministering of the nation's wealth to both Popish and Pagan idolatry, by giving new facilities to Socinian error, by indifference to the cry of oppressed believers in foreign lands, by legalizing vice, by sanctioning larger inroads on the Sabbath's rest, and by putting in operation various forces to traverse the Church's path, and to impede her efforts. Who does not see that we have, by many infallible tokens, entailed on ourselves the vengeance of the Lord ; and that our sins, committed as they have been, after ages of unexampled privilege and unspeakable mercy, cry loudly to the avenger of his heritage ? It is neither honesty to deny, nor is it charity to conceal, our exposure to national ruin ; and as little is it the part, either of wisdom or of faith, to doubt that God has even now many channels open by which judgment may be rushing in upon us. If even the eye of secular philosophy is discovering indications of national instability and decay, how much more may those who are enlightened from above to know the true causes of the rise and fall of kingdoms, be afraid to say that our "mountain stands strong." But the time of God's recompense to our nation for the controversy of Zion, however near it may be, has not yet come. God's long-suffering still waits, as it did in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing. And the time of long-suffering is a time of probation—a time during which repentance may avail, and has availed, as in the case of Nineveh, to avert impending judgment,—a time, therefore, during which we ought solemnly and busily to ply the means and motives to repentance. And surely we do not arrogate to ourselves any pre-eminence, or ascribe to

our position an undue importance, when we feel that on us as a Church of Christ, there lies a peculiar responsibility to arouse our fellow-countrymen to a sense of danger, and to strive after the spiritual renovation of the land.

In order aright to acquit ourselves of this responsibility, it is essential that we correctly understand and that we keep constantly in view the object for which we are to labour. Now, we need not conceal, and as little ought we to forget, that that at which we are bound ultimately to aim is, that the nation should, in the fullest and highest sense of the expression, "serve the church." In looking forward to this, we are seeking not the aggrandizement of the church, but the safety of the nation. For this, we know, will be the characteristic of nations in millennial times; and less than this, as our text assures us, will not save them from pre-millennial judgments, or afford them a passport to the millennial state. And let it not be supposed that we may struggle for it on the arena of earthly politics, or expect it as the result of human policy. We are to aim at it no otherwise than as the natural and necessary result of a spiritual awakening and reformation among all classes of the people. Whatever may have been the case in other countries and at other times, the regeneration of the individuals of whom the nation is composed, and that alone, can be expected to better our national condition, to impart a Christward tendency to our national acts, to enable the national mind to perceive the spiritual standing and claims of the Church, and to produce a real consecration of national power and glory to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. In every view, then, the conversion of souls is the primary and immediate object with which, as a Church of the Redeemer, we have to do. In striving to effect this, let us consider what labours the necessities of the case demand, and what means and expectations the divine Word warrants; and when we do consider that the destinies of this land are, in a sense, in our hands, that its safety depends on us, more than upon the skill of statesmen and the might of armies, what manner of men should this make us in all holy activity! What fresh energy should it inspire into all that we undertake, whether as ministers or as private Christians! Let it animate us to untiring labour, for what amount and vigour of labour is too great a sacrifice to make for the end in view, or is more than sufficient to overcome the far extending mass of ungodly men, and to break the hardened heart that is in each of them? Let us become more earnest and abundant in prayer, till we see the Spirit poured out as floods on the dry ground, for on the issue of our prayers are suspended interests greater than life and death. Let us cultivate in ourselves, as individuals and as a Church, greater purity and a higher spirituality, that we may indeed be "living epistles of Christ, known

and read of all men," Let us strive after clearer and nearer views of the Saviour's glory, "that the light of the Lord" being indeed "risen upon us," we may reflect it with such brilliancy that the Gentiles may come to our light, and kings to the brightness of our rising.

For our own sakes individually, as well as for the sake of the nation, we ought not to forget that the course of safety is the service of God. This not only is true with reference to the final salvation of the soul, but is also generally realized in the arrangements of Divine Providence on earth. The troubles of the righteous are not *ordinarily* so numerous or so sharp as those of the ungodly. Whilst unmortified passions and unholy lives entail upon the wicked agony, and shame, and poverty, "godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come." Even seasons of persecution, when the wicked triumph, and the blood of the righteous is poured out like water, cannot be allowed to furnish an exception to this rule. For, besides that believers partake an abundant recompence in spiritual consolation, the persecution of the Church is invariably followed up by judgments on the persecutors: "The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous" be thereby induced to "put forth their hands unto iniquity." The chastisement of God's people is never so severe as the punishment of their enemies. The bondage under which the Israelites groaned in Egypt was bitter, but the punishment which overtook their oppressors was death. The early Christians suffered much at the hands of the Jews, but not so much as the Jews themselves suffered in the desolation of their city. The fiery trials which yet await the church, and of which perhaps the shadow now rests upon her, will be followed up by the tremendous judgments which the text predicts. The Church will survive the former, but the wicked will be destroyed by the latter. How vain, then, as well as sinful, for men to think, as we have seen so many do, to save their lives, or protect their earthly interests, by abandoning the afflicted church, and resigning the persecuted profession, and the offensive principles. In doing so, they most certainly incur the very loss which they dread, they take their places, without the ark, amongst those over whom God's vengeance will speedily sweep with overwhelming fury. They may not become agents in persecuting the people of God, they may join a communion as near in principle to that which they have left, as temporal safety will permit, or the world will tolerate; but they have crossed the line which separates those who are "not ashamed of Christ and his words," and who are "losing their lives for his sake and the Gospel's," from those who are hastening the nation's doom; and judgment will find them among its victims. "He that saveth his life shall lose it," in the most strict

and literal sense, when "God cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose its blood, and shall no more cover its slain." Let us, then, be instructed that steadfastness in faith, and continuance in holiness, are the means of safety. We know not what God may have in store for our guilty land, whether a time of favour, or a season of judgment. But whilst we ought to resign this in patience to the disposal of the Divine sovereignty, and to be ready to say, "even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," we should not forget that if, on the one hand, our <sup>land</sup> <sup>is saved,</sup> <sup>this will be only by the intercession and labours of God's servants</sup> <sup>and that,</sup> on the other hand, his judgments, if they do come, will be discriminating—that, just as the Israelites were passed over by the angel of death, and as the believers did not perish in Jerusalem's calamity, so, though there be only three righteous men in the land, they will save their own lives by their righteousness (Ezek. xiv. 20).

How urgently, then, does the alternative of impending ruin, as well as the hope of national preservation, call on us to labour efficiently, and to pray earnestly, while yet it is day. The time may come, when the voice of intercession will be hushed by the stern command, "Pray not for this people for their good;" when the exertions of Christian zeal will be arrested by the solemn message, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast;" when there will be presented to the Church the dreary spectacle of the nation shut up in hopeless impenitence to its inevitable doom. How melancholy will be the contemplation, if the guilt of this impenitence is wholly chargeable upon the nation! But how agonizing the reflection, if it be chargeable equally upon the nation and the church!

## SERMON XXXVII.

BY THE REV. J. R. OMOND, MONZIE.

CHRIST'S JOY IN HIS PEOPLE.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."—ZEPHANIAH, iii. 17.

ZEPHANIAH lived and prophesied during the reign of King Josiah. At that time the iniquity of the Jews was very great, and as a nation they were fast ripening for punishment. Beneath the veil of thin transparency, cast over the scene by the personal piety of the youthful monarch, were visible, a temple desecrated, a country given to idolatry, an overthrown altar, a scattered priesthood, oracles silenced, sacrifices suspended. Still in the midst of much calculated in every way to weary out the long-suffering of Jehovah, and to bring down on a guilty people his terrible wrath, he remembered the covenant which he had made of old with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob, he avowed his determination to chastise, but it was in mercy—he would carry them far from their own land, but, again would he bring back their captivity, causing Jacob to rejoice and Israel to be glad. Battle and defeat, exile and slavery, were in store for them—still these would pass away—days of rejoicing would come again; and, referring to that time, the Prophet says in the context, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, fear thou not: and to Zion, let not mine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." I pause not now to enquire how much or how little of this prophecy was fulfilled, when the Jews *did* return from Babylon after their seventy years' captivity; neither do I enquire how much of it we are to regard as having been accomplished, when in very deed the King of Israel, even the Lord, the Lord Jesus, was personally, during the days of his flesh, in the midst of them. I enter not on this inquiry farther than to say, that whatever partial fulfilment this prophecy may have received at the periods al-



luded to, no one, I apprehend, will fail to perceive, or hesitate to admit, that its entire, yea, its principal accomplishment is still future. It points the hopes and the faith of the Church to a time, when the long-separated and widely scattered tribes of Judah shall again be re-united, when Israel shall once more take that place which was hers of old, when, reinstated in her birthright, and re-established in the favour of her God, she shall again be his peculiar people, his portion and the lot of his inheritance.

But, on this, as I have said, I do not enter, and I go on to make application of the truths contained in the text to ourselves, and I take the statements in the order in which they are here presented.

### *I. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty.*

Our Saviour is a God near at hand, not a God far off. Close and intimate is the relation in which he stands to his people. If they are branches, he is the parent stem; if they are members, he is the head of that body of which they are members; if they are lively stones, he is the foundation, the chief corner stone, the head stone of the spiritual house, into which they are built up; if the collective body of believers are spoken of under the similitude of the bride, the Lamb's wife, he is the bridegroom, her Maker is her husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; if, as is the case in the text, the figure employed to designate the Church be a city, then the Lord is in the midst of that city, he beautifies and strengthens it by his presence, he defends its inhabitants, he bestows on them rest, and peace, and joy. *And he is mighty.* He doth what he will with his own, and all things are his. He ruleth according to the good pleasure of his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this earth. All things were created by him, and all things exist through him, and for him. The greatest feel his power, the least are not exempt from his care; the highest of the heavenly hosts exists but to fulfil his purposes; a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his permission. That he is mighty, he demonstrated in the formation of this world. He manifested his eternal power and Godhead to the whole intelligent creation, causing the morning stars to sing together, and all the sons of God to shout for joy. This he did, by calling into being this fair earth on which we live, laying its foundations not to be moved, compassing the waters with bounds which they cannot pass, establishing and making sure the everlasting hills, and clothing the vallies with the verdure of beauty, and causing the bud of the tender herb to spring forth. Magnificently glorious, however, as this proof of his might and his majesty is, —ample as is the demonstration which we receive from the works of crea-

tion, that the Lord our God is mighty—we are taught still more clearly in the plan of redemption that he is so, that he is mighty and mighty to save; and this leads me to the second statement in the text—he will save.

II. *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save.*

This is a precious promise—a promise made to Christ's own people, and to be understood, therefore, as intimating his holy purpose to save from all useless dread and alarm—to save from all unnecessary trials and assaults—those whom he has already saved from the power of sin, and the dominion of iniquity. There is no promise made here or elsewhere in Scripture that a believer will be saved from suffering, and sorrow, and temptations; what is promised is this, that he will not be overcome of these. The declarative glory of his Lord may be shewn forth, and his own increasing sanctification may be advanced, by his being subjected to severest trials; and if so, these will not be wanting. If unnecessary, they will be withheld; if needful, they will be allowed. Still, to his own people, Christ will shew himself in the days to come, as he has already in times past shewn himself, by his dearest name, by his name Jesus, the Saviour. He *has* saved them. Wandering in the midst of darkness, and folly, and sin, he sought them, and brought them to light, life, and liberty. He had compassion on us when we had no compassion on ourselves. Lost and undone, he found us, and delivered us, and what he has done is but the earnest of what he will yet do. From the bondage of Satan, and the enduring thralldom of their own evil lusts and passions, has he saved his people. He has given them comparative rest here, and he has graciously assured them that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate them from his love. He has saved them from the power, and the pollution, and the abiding practice of sin—he *is* saving them, day by day, from every sorrow and every trial that they can be spared, and from yielding themselves the slaves to Satan's will. From the harassing desires of the flesh, and the alternating promises and disappointments of the world, is he saving them; and he will save them from aught that can seriously injure them—he will keep them like the apple of the eye, and bring them in safety to his Father's home. To those, then, among you who, on Scriptural grounds, have a well-founded hope, that you are of them to whom the promise is made—to those among you who are in Christ Jesus, saved by him from the dominion of sin, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—to you would I say, call to remembrance the majesty of the great Being on

whose faithfulness you have perilled your all—let your thoughts dwell on the nearness of the relation in which you stand to him—he is all-powerful, all-faithful, all love. Seek to have in lively exercise an abiding recollection of the deliverance which he has already wrought out for you, freeing you from the curse of the law, from the lashings of an aroused conscience, from the fear of coming wrath, and delivering you at the same time from the bondage of divers lusts and passions. These things call to remembrance, that you may be stirred up to greater zeal and stedfastness, and that you may ever seek to be enabled to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Salvation is yours, if you are Christ's. Saved from the power of sin here, you will here, too, be saved from the punishment which invariably follows sin, even in this world. And in the world to come, when you there awake, you will be satisfied, for you will behold his face in righteousness—in his presence there is fulness of joy, at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore. But if we are Christ's—if we are indeed members of his mystical body, heirs of God, joint-heirs with him—then, not only are we in possession of an abiding joy, of which we cannot be deprived by aught that is earthly, but we are—with reverence be it spoken—the inciting cause of joy in the bosom of Immanuel. Joy must and will thrill the soul of the believer, when he remembers what has been done for him, and when, with the eye of faith, he anticipates that which is awaiting him; but the text tells us, that when our Saviour turns his contemplative regards on his people—and when does he cease for a moment to behold them? “I the Lord do keep my vineyard, my vineyard of red wine; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”—when Christ turns his contemplative regards on his people, it is that he may rejoice over them with joy; and to this, the third statement in the text, let us now attend.

III. *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy.*

Christ is represented in Scripture as looking forth on a world of immortal spirits—who had cast off their allegiance to their rightful sovereign—who had banded themselves together against his authority, and were therefore justly obnoxious to severest punishment. He looked and there were none to help—he wondered that there was none to uphold—and, in the greatness of his love, he determined to seek and to save. Leaving the bosom of the Father, and becoming incarnate, he dwelt amongst us, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The malice and the ingratitude of men, the assaults of Satan, the treachery of his enemies, and the desertion and denial of his friends—the agony of the

garden, the night of grief in Herod's hall, the shame and pain of the accursed tree, and the hidings of his Father's face, were all endured. That which bore up his holy human soul during the terrible conflict in which he fought our battle with the adversary, was the joy set before him, even the joy of bringing many sons and daughters unto glory; and now that he has triumphed, and has ascended up on high, and has again taken unto himself the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, he is spoken of in the text and in all Scripture, as rejoicing over his people with joy. They are his by creation—they are his by purchase—they are his by adoption—they are his by a begun and progressive sanctification. In the counsels of eternity were they given unto him by the Father—he loved them with an everlasting love; when the fulness of time had come, he sought them and he found them. The co-equal and co-eternal Spirit quickens and renews them. He dwells in them, and carries on towards perfection the holiness already begun. There is nought in the contemplation of the natural man to call forth the joy of the Saviour; but, if we are his, then are we washed in his blood, and clad in his righteousness. His likeness is impressed on our souls—the impress is becoming, day by day, more manifest, and *He* rejoices that it is so. There is joy among the angels of heaven, we are told, when a sinner turns from the error of his ways; but, from the text, we learn, that a joy more ineffable still rises in the heart of Him whose nature is infinite, and whose capacities are boundless, when he turns to behold his image and superscription in the souls of his people. Oh, Brethren, if it be indeed true that the believer is the object of such love, and the cause of such joy, and if we are believers, what manner of persons ought we to be?—how wary, how watchful in our every-day life and conversation?—how willing to bear and forbear for Jesus' sake?—how able to spend and be spent in his work? He loved his people, and he saved, and is saving them. His delights are with them. He rejoices to contemplate, in their increasing resemblance to himself, the results of his tabernacling among us in the days of his flesh. Full well does he know our frame, our wants, and our weaknesses,—our needs and our necessities. We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all respects tempted like as we are, yet without sin. As we never would have sought him, had he not first sought us—as we would have continued departing farther and farther from him, plunging still deeper in the ways of sin and death, and, eventually losing ourselves in the blackness of darkness for ever—had he not graciously drawn near to us, bringing us, blind as we were, by a way that we knew not—leading us in paths that we had not known—making darkness light before us and crooked things

straight—so now, after all that we have seen and tasted of his goodness, were he to withdraw and leave us to ourselves, we could not, unaided, pursue our course Zionward; so far from being able to move onward and upward, we should at once lose that which we have already attained, and our last state would be worse than our first. But from all this we are safe. If we are his for a moment, we are his for ever; if we are his for time, we are his for eternity. If we have been enabled to take up our cross, and are bearing it, no one shall prevail to pluck from our heads the crown of righteousness which is already prepared for us. The Lord taketh pleasure in his people, he rejoices over them with joy—and why? We have already seen that he does so, because they have been made like unto him. They love what he loves; they seek what he seeks. If there be joy called forth in the bosom of the Saviour when he regards his people, it is because they resemble him; and may we not say, that this, his joy, will increase as they are more and more assimilated to his glorious likeness—that his joy will be fulfilled when we all—that is, all who are really his people—when we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord? To bring his people to this perfect state, he watches over them—his eye is ever on them. What is superfluous, he removes; what is awanting, he supplies. Constant and unceasing is the care with which he cares for those whom he has saved. His visits are not like those of the way-faring man, who turneth aside to tarry but for a night. No, he abideth among his people; he dwelleth in the midst of them; they constitute his joy; they call forth his love, and he will rest in his love. And this, you perceive, is the fourth statement made in our text, and to it let us now attend.

IV. *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love.*

What our translators have here rendered “he will rest in his love” might have been rendered, as will be seen from the margin, “he will be silent,” or, “he will keep silence, in his love;” and, without refining too far, may we not say, that this suggests the idea of a love too great for utterance; it speaks of emotions too deep—too profound—to be expressed in words. Among men, the form of expression is common enough, and, doubtless, there are cases in which it is applicable. Of the propriety or the impropriety of allowing the creature to take that hold of our hearts which the applicability of such language, in so far as man is concerned, pre-supposes, I speak not. I allude merely to the fact, that there are cases in which the heart of man so yearns over his fellows—where the

depths of the soul are so stirred by the contemplation of those whom God has given us, or rather—and this, I apprehend, is the more common case—by the remembrance of some one who once was, but now is no more—there are cases in which it is no exaggeration, but, on the contrary, it is employing the words of truth and soberness, to say, that human language is inadequate to express human feelings. But it is marvellous to find this form of expression resorted to in the text. If I am right in supposing that the statement, “I will be silent in my love,” bespeaks a love too intense to find vent in words, then have we here the most amazing proof of the Saviour’s love. That man should be unable to express in words that love, is no wonder—that man should be unable to comprehend the words that the Spirit might have employed to describe Immanuel’s love, is nothing astonishing. But is not this the statement in the text—and is it not a marvellous one—that to his people—his blood-bought and beatified people—there rests in the innermost heart of the Saviour such intense, inconceivable, affection, that even he, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, hangs over them, as it were, without a word—rests in his love—keeps silence therein? No language of man can express the Saviour’s love; no conception of man can, in any adequate degree, grasp that love. But does it not aid us, in some measure, in our attempts to perceive something of its greatness, to remember that it is a love so vast, so unparalleled, that he in whose bosom it has its serene seat contemplates its objects with the silence of intensest emotion? But, again, “I will be silent in my love,” suggests to the mind the mode in which Christ pours down on his Church those spiritual blessings that are needed to carry believers onward, and to bring them to that condition in which, his *image* being perfected in them, his *joy* in them will be full. When Elijah, as we read in the 19th chapter of first Kings, was, by God’s command, upon the Mount before the Lord, “the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice: and it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.” The rending of rocks, the earthquake, and the fire, doubtless betokened Jehovah’s presence, but it was in the still small voice that his communications reached the Prophet’s ear. “I will,” says God, by the mouth of another prophet, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Silently, imperceptibly, noiseless in its fall, when the sultry fires of day are wasted, comes the refreshing dew of evening, and it is not till all things are gladdened by its

presence—it is not till then that flower and fruit, tree and shrub, cast forth their richest perfume, grateful as the evening incense, and like it, too, an offering to God—nature's sweet-smelling savour, presented in her own magnificent temple, to her God—it is not till then that we perceive that, once more, as of old, may we not say it, has the Lord God been walking in the cool of the day in his garden, and his footsteps, though unheard,—his presence, though unseen,—have caused all things to rejoice on every side. The figure which the Spirit has thus seen fit to employ, in making known to us the determination of God to beautify and strengthen his people, is descriptive, at the same time, of the manner in which he communicates with them. Christ speaks to the souls of his people; they recognise his voice—by the world it is unrecognised; they hear his words—these are unheard and unheeded by the world. There is a silent work being carried on by the Saviour in the souls that are his; he has his hidden ones; the world knows them not, even as it knew him not, but they are all known to him. The subjects of his grace, and the objects of his love, he will not fail to visit them—to dwell with and in them—saying, in the soft accents of an ever-enduring love, “This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.” There is a silent work going on in every Congregation where the Spirit is present. Prayers and praises are offered up—rebukes and expostulations, warnings and entreaties are given—Sabbath after Sabbath comes and passes—communion season succeeds communion season—and it may be, that, to the eye of sight, things appear as they were; but if the Spirit is there, his shafts are piercing the hearts of the enemies of the King; they are moving noiselessly, but they are flying surely—the arrow of conviction enters—conviction passes into conversion—souls are born again. There is a silent work going on in every living branch of the Church universal. The world sees not this, The world marks what is outward; it detects not that which is within. The world sees the bold and uncompromising defence of truth—the burning desire to carry the glad message of salvation to perishing sinners displayed by every living Church—this the world sees, and misunderstands, and misrepresents; but the internal life—the heart's blood that nourishes these desires—is unknown and unseen. There is a silent march of circumstances taking place in the Church universal. All things are moving towards one common point—are making for one common centre. He who arranged all things, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done—beholds the progress of events hastening to a termination, when, having gathered in his elect people from the four corners of the earth, he shall present to his father and to our father—to his God and to our God—the general assembly and Church of the first born,

which are written in heaven,—that chosen, called, renewed, sanctified, and then glorified Church, whom he covenanted for in the depths of an untrodden eternity.

I would now turn to the fifth statement in the text—*he will joy over thee with singing*—but time will not permit me to enter on this. If not regarded as an amplification of the preceding promises, rather than as a new promise in itself, it speaks of a time when the watchful care of the Saviour will be followed by a feeling of ecstatic joy—of a time when the silence of unutterable emotion will be broken in upon by the triumphant voice of him whose voice is as the sound of many waters. Taking this view of the statement, it suggests to the mind glowing anticipations of that day when Christ will lead into the glorious courts above his redeemed and ransomed people. As our Justifier, he is in the midst of us, mighty to save; as our Sanctifier, he rejoices over us with joy unspeakable. He keeps silence in his love; unceasingly, though to the world unwittingly, he causes the needful blessings to descend on his Church. He over-rules all things, making them to work together for her good; and when her beauty is made perfect through his comeliness, which he has put upon her, as her Glorifier, will he come again in his own glory, and the glory of his father and that of the holy angels, and carry her into that new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, where peace rules supreme, where love is the sole law and praise the sole employ. There will be heard the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And now, dear Brethren, permit me again to ask you, if these things be really so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness. And if there are those present this day, who, up to this time, have lived regardless of the glory of the Redeemer, and unmindful of the value of their own souls, not heeding, though hearing of the great things which he has done for his Church and people, acting for all practical purposes, as if he had never appeared on this earth, and was not to come again—if there are those present, who are contented with having a name to live, while in truth their souls are dead, busying themselves chiefly with the cares and the concerns of a present world, and seldom remembering, and never seriously meditating on the things which belong to their everlasting peace—if there are those present, whose hearts glow with warmth when they call to mind earthly friends, their love and their affection, but who read with cold indifference of the love and the long-suffering of the Saviour—who see in him no beauty that they should desire him, perceiving nothing in what he



is in himself, and nothing in all that he has done for his people to call forth the affections of the soul,—Oh, if there are any present, thus cold, insensible, dead, their danger is imminent, their jeopardy is fearful. What is it that the wilful sinner is doing—and all who are not in Christ Jesus new creatures are wilful sinners? The wilful sinner is despising the long-suffering mercy of God—he is rejecting proffered grace—trampling under foot offers of peace and reconciliation, and spurning everlasting love. A love which neither man nor angel, nor the redeemed in glory, can fathom, is the love with which we have been loved. A love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown, dwells in the Saviour's bosom, and this love is, by guilty, perishing, hell-preparing sinners, forfeited. Ere yet it be too late—while you are still in the land of love—in the place where Christ gave the mightiest exhibition of his love—seek to turn unto him. His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear—his hand is not shortened that it cannot save. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Souls he has saved, souls he is saving, souls he will save. Ere yet you are hurried into outer darkness, which even the light of his countenance cannot illumine—ere yet you are compelled to make your bed in hell—bethink yourselves, cry mightily unto him. A lost soul, an undone eternity! everlasting exclusion from glory—perpetual condemnation to the regions of woe! Is this your willing choice—is such your deliberate selection? Oh, be wise, kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him. And to those among you, of whom I hope and trust there are a goodly few—to those among you who are in Christ Jesus, walking by faith and not by sight—denying yourselves, and seeking to glorify him in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his—to you would I say, remember the price that was paid for your redemption. You were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Estimable in Christ's sight were your souls—he deemed not his own life a ransom too great to give for them. For the sanctifying and the beautifying of your souls, is the eternal Spirit to abide in the Church till Christ come again. Vex not that Spirit. The glory of the Saviour is seen in this, that his people are made a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Thou art all fair, says the bridegroom to the spouse in the song—thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. This perfection of beauty in the whole, depends on the perfection of every part. Seek ye then to be perfect, even as Christ is perfect! Seek to grow in deadness to this world, in likeness to Christ, in preparedness for all that he is preparing for us here, and in meetness for glory, honour, and eternal life,

## SERMON XXXVIII.

THE DISPENSATIONS OF THE SPIRIT IN GOSPEL TIMES.

(Preached before the Free Synod of Perth, 15th October 1844, and published at their request.)

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER CUMMING, DUNBARNEY.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, if any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified."—JOHN viii. 37-39.

THE interesting instructions of Jesus which are couched in this chapter, were pronounced on the occasion of his visiting Jerusalem, during the Feast of Tabernacles. For six months previous to that solemnity he had remained at a distance from that sacred city, in order to elude the murderous designs of the Jews; but, though exiled from the territory of Judea, the blaze of this glorious Sun of Righteousness was not withdrawn from the earth—his beams, though forfeited by the guilty citizens of the metropolis of the Holy Land, fell with genial influence on its northern frontiers. Galilee of the Gentiles, and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, overhung with the shadow of death, revived under their renovating energy. His friends urged him to go to Jerusalem at the commencement of the festival, to perform a train of splendid miracles, such as had signalized his march through the regions of Galilee, and insinuated that, if he declined to do this, it would be from a dread that performances which had excited the wonder of the comparatively untutored inhabitants of a provincial district, could not pass through the scrutinising ordeal of the learned and the great. But he refused to go up till the middle of the feast, when the roads were no longer crowded with passengers, and when the Jews, not anticipating his arrival, would have less time to concert their plans for his death. Four or five days after the tribes were convened, at a time of the solemnity when comparatively few rites were going forward at the temple, Christ burst upon the congregated thousands in the outer court, and poured forth such a profusion of eloquent instructions, as drew the wondering interrogatory, "How knoweth this man letters, seeing he hath never learned?" Never did his addresses encounter more virulent opposition than on this occasion, and never did the yearnings of his love break forth in more impassioned ardour. They

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exclaimed, "He deceiveth the people, he hath a devil; but the more wretched their cavils became, and the more opprobrious their reproaches, the more did his heart swell with emotions of commiserating tenderness. The chief priests determined to silence him while uttering such strains of melodious invitation, and they dispatched officers to apprehend him; but on the day on which they were charged with this commission, no opportunity for executing their errand presented itself, that would not have endangered a tumult; they did not, therefore, return to their employers till the next day. No display of human malignity or murderous rage, could stop the genial current of love that flowed from Him who spake as never man spake. As man's enmity became darker, he strove with more animated ardour to woo him from folly. He is repeatedly said to have *cried*, that his words might be heard by the whole listening throng; and on the last and great day of the feast, he stood as well as cried. Teachers among the Jews, in delivering their instructions, affected a sitting posture, and it was only on more extraordinary occasions that they stood. Jesus, instinct with bowels of pity for those who were spurning away eternal life, wished to make a more passionate appeal than ever; and therefore, when the priests were surrounding the altar with palm-branches in their hands, and pouring out on it water, he exclaimed in kindling pathos, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, he that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The wide range of this promise will be evident, if we remark that those who thirst are not merely persons thirsting after righteousness, though doubtless these are included, but all who are thirsting after happiness. Thus in Isaiah (lv. 1.), it is said, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money;" and where the persons athirst are not those whose desires are quickened after celestial communications, for they are said (Isaiah, lv. 2.) to be spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. The word "thirst" delineates those who are tossed and restless, through cravings after felicity which they know not how to get gratified; and to persons in this dissatisfied condition, the inspiring offer of the text is uttered.

The promise embodied in these words refers to the Holy Ghost, whose living waters could be imparted in only a stinted measure, under the Old Testament, seeing the Saviour was not yet glorified. Accordingly, it is observed by Dr Owen, that those passages in the prophetic Scriptures which speak of the Spirit being "poured out," always refer to New Testament times—the term "pouring out" indicating an exuberant abundance, such as could not be granted till the great sacrifice was offered. The increased measures of spiritual influence attest God's

acceptance of Christ's expiation. A holy God granted straitened supplies under the legal system, to intimate that the great atonement was not offered; and then, after it was presented, to show it was embued with infinite intrinsic merit, his gifts and graces were showered down in unrestricted copiousness.

When it is said, "the Holy Ghost was not yet given," this does not mean that his sanctifying influences were never diffused over the hearts of men. Christ uses similar phraseology, when, in his parting address to his disciples, he says (John xvi. 16, 17), "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, even the spirit of truth," &c. : "but ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you." What he did when inspiring the prophets, and imparting gifts and graces in former times, was ascribed to Jehovah; but after Christ left the world, and he remained the only person of the Godhead, immediately working in the Church, all his operations were attributed to himself, as the Third Person of the glorious Trinity. He was to step forth with a kind of visible pomp, to manifest himself as the agent who was to apply to the Church what Christ had purchased; and we are, therefore, to expect from him such an effusion of living water, as will constitute an unequivocal evidence that Christ is now seated at God's right hand.

The words of the text imply, not only the communication of the Spirit's influence, as the sun's beams animate the earth, though the residence is aloft in the firmament above our heads—they imply the inhabitation of the Divine agent himself—the Sun as well as the sunbeams must be introduced into the soul. The Spirit is the well, and his quickening and sanctifying operations, creating the virtues of the Christian character in us, are the waters bubbling up in us. No stock of grace in a saint has such elements of durability, as that it could be called a perennial spring. Our heavenly frames, on a Sabbath or Sacramental season would be succeeded by blighting worldliness, or utter decay, were it not that the Spirit, with his vital energy, abides in us—the fountain is ever flowing, because the Spirit is ever abiding in the soul.

Now, it was on the last day of the feast, after enduring a series of harassing provocations, that Christ stepped forward and gave vent to his love, in this benignant statement. While a vast confluence of worshippers thronged the court of the temple, Jesus stood and cried, as if to make the high festival day a real and substantial feast, by the generous and unbounded welcome he was to issue. The solemnity of tabernacles was the most gladdening of all the feasts, and Christ felt prompted by the impulses of kindness to make it a festival indeed; and as it was on the last day, when many were collected who must soon retire to their own abodes, he was the more urgent in pressing his favours on

their acceptance, that those who might never enjoy another opportunity of hearing him might accept his offers.

There is something intensely interesting, both in the freeness and fulness of the promise comprised in these words, "if any man thirst." Its comprehensive range includes in it even the officers who were sent to apprehend him, that he might be murdered. If any man, however depraved or hostile to me—if any man, though actively meditating my death, come unto me, out of him shall flow rivers. And it would seem as if to stamp a glorious significancy on this prodigal offer, that he conferred his spirit on some of the most degraded of his audience, even on the agents of justice who were sent to capture him; for when, after returning to their employers, they were interrogated as to why they had not dragged Christ as a criminal into their presence, they replied, "Never man spake like this man." It did not seem enough to say, that they had no opportunity of taking him—that would not have embroiled the area of the temple in a tumult; or to frame any plausible excuse to shelter themselves from blame and punishment. Though previous to this time they might, through the agency of their masters, have been so much entrenched in prejudice against Christ, as to become their willing tools in apprehending him, they were so melted and overpowered by his strains of eloquence, far surpassing what David's harp had ever breathed, that they exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man;" he is superior to you, or any teacher who ever lived. Christ had made captives of those who came to make him a prisoner, by uttering a few words of commanding energy, and made noble witnesses for his cause out of those who had come to crush it. At the very time when offering the superabundant measures of his grace to the dense assemblage in the temple, he seems to have singled out some of his most obdurate hearers, to shew how extensive a class his promise could reach.

And there was a peculiar propriety in Christ's stepping forth to enliven the Feast of Tabernacles with such an endearing promise as that contained in the text. It commemorated the fact of the Israelites pitching their tents in the wilderness, while God's pavilion was spread in the centre of their encampment. Moses had, for two prolonged periods of forty days, held sublime converse with God on the blazing peak of Sinai; at the expiration of the second interval of forty days, he descended to intimate that his intercession had procured the favour of God, and that, though Jehovah had ordered his tents to be removed afar off from their habitations, he was now reconciled, and was willing to dwell in the midst of them. "The day of his descent," says President Edwards, "was the first day of the seventh month. He then issued directions for rearing Jehovah's tabernacle, and fixing it permanently in the midst of

them; the people spread their tents to remain in the same position" till the midst of their dwellings was ennobled with the glowing symbol of God's immediate presence. Hence the fifteenth day of the month, and the seven subsequent days, were appropriated to the sacred festival of the tabernacles, in memorial of their sojourning in the desert, while the sacred residence of God dignified and hallowed the interior of their encampment. Their sojourn in an arid wilderness might not, when detached from other circumstances, be the subject of cheering retrospect; but their dwelling in it, graced with the pavilion in which was enshrined, or on which glowed, the fiery column, was a theme of gladdening exultation. Now, as the feast of the Passover and of Pentecost, while perpetuating the memory of past interpositions of God in behalf of his people, shadowed future events, so it is with the Feast of Tabernacles; it seems to have pictured two sublime realities,—first, the incarnation of Christ; second, God's dwelling in his Church, in the profuse pledges of his presence, during the lustre of the millennial day. The tabernacle in the wilderness was erected at this feast, and owned by the pledge of God's presence. The temple of Solomon was dedicated at the recurrence of it. Christ is generally supposed to have been born on the first day of it, and to have been circumcised on the eighth. It was, therefore, peculiarly suitable, that he who had vouchsafed to unite the fulness of the Godhead to a corporeal structure, should, when they were commemorating the mere figurative or shadowy abode of God with their fathers in the wilderness, step forth and offer them greater blessings than the pillar of cloud ever presaged or guaranteed, when shedding its mild glories among the dwellings of their ancestors. Their fathers had elements of enlivening gladness when, amidst the sultry blaze of noon, God overshadowed them by his wings, in spreading the cloud over their head, for this was a pledge of protection and help; but when Christ, as God-man, tabernacled in human flesh, and trod the temple courts, filling them with the softened splendours of divinity, this was an assurance of more exuberant mercies. Here was Divine love pouring its radiance from the tabernacle of Christ's body! Jesus rejoiced that he was now tabernacling in the midst of his people; he rejoiced that, by his incarnation, he was brought near to man, and now he was willing to enrich them with a plenitude of joy far greater than the luminous symbol of God's protection had ever conferred on Israel of old.

And, doubtless, when he uttered these words, his prophetic eye glanced through intervening centuries to the time when all nations would go to keep the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, and when living waters would go forth from Jerusalem to water the valley of Shittim. (Zech. 14.)

During the continuance of this festival, the Jews carried in their

hands branches of palm trees and willows, singing hosanna, "Save I beseech thee," quoting the words of the 118th Psalm, verse 25, and praying with vehement importunity for the advent of Christ; and so intimately did they associate the carrying of such branches, and shouts of hosanna, with the coming of the Messiah, that, when he was riding in regal triumph into Jerusalem, and the multitude were disposed to acknowledge him as the Messiah who *had* come, they waved their branches and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." And, therefore, at a feast where they petitioned Jehovah to send the Messiah, he stood among them and offered those blessings which the Messiah was to confer. And this will be the more affecting, if we attend to the usage which seems to have been performing when Christ breathed this inspiring message. On the last day of the feast, the Jews were accustomed to fetch water from the fountain of Siloam in a golden pitcher, and the officiating priest poured it, mixed with wine, upon the morning sacrifice, as it lay on the altar, the Jews uttering the words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the well of salvation." This water was, according to the Jews themselves, an emblem of the Holy Spirit; and when this libation was performed, Christ stood forth and said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He did not say, I will pray for the Spirit—I am myself the dispenser of his life-giving influences. The pool of Siloam and waters of Siloe are repeatedly referred to in Scripture.

The waters of Siloe issued, not from Zion where David's palace towered, but from the craggy side of Moriah, upon which the temple was erected. Their origin cannot be traced, being hid in the cavities of the rock; and this may well represent him who is the eternal Son of God, the fountain of whose being is hid in the abyss of the eternity that is past. The spring is first seen by travellers on their descending a number of steps to the entrance of a cavern in Moriah, from whose recesses they flow forth; there they glide with such noiseless softness, that, at first, they were supposed by our deputation to be stationary, till one of them, by inserting his hand beneath their surface, recognised the force of the current.\* This denotes him who is the Shiloh—the Sent by the Father. When he burst on the world, in his incarnation or public ministry, he came not like a destroying stream to which the enemies of Judah are compared (Isa. viii. 7), but like the gently gliding Siloe. He came fraught with tidings of mercy—he was compassionate—the Prince of Peace; and not like the Assyrian army, which is compared to the devastating waters of the Euphrates, swelled to inundation, that would overflow the territory of Judea, and reach up to the neck. After rolling on for a short distance

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\* Narrative of a Mission to the Jews.

they form the pool of Siloam, where the blind man laved his distempered eyes; and after meandering through the plains of Judea, they reach the sterile shores of the Dead Sea, that forms their final receptacle. It is remarkable that their source and issue correspond with the course of the healing waters in Ezekiel, which emanated from the threshold of the sanctuary, and were discharged into the Salt Sea, whose deadly bosom they impregnated with life, so that it was animated with multitudes of fish, which were enclosed in the nets of fishermen plying their avocation from Engedi to Eneglain. Christ is like the waters of Siloe, that are not restricted to Jerusalem, but which glide on to the desert and the sea. His quickening power is not restricted to the Jews; it gladdens the wilderness, gracing it with innumerable trees, and then peoples the ocean with its appropriate denizens. Christ cheers moral wastes, and infuses life into masses and communities that are like the Dead Sea, which entombs the guilty cities of the plain, and that has been cursed for thousands of years as a touching memorial of their guilt.

Now, when Christ, after the golden pitcher poured its contents on the altar, uttered the exhilarating proclamation in the text, it was as much as to say, I am the true Siloam, sent of God to give peace, liberty, and joy. Come to me; I am the waters that flow softly; I will be to you an exhaustless spring of happiness; I am sent for the very purpose of dispensing the Spirit; I come not to set up a temporal kingdom, but I am here as Messiah to give the Spirit. Christ was accustomed, when people's notice was attracted to any object that was typical of his person or mediatorial work, to transfer their attention from the figure to himself the antitype. Thus, at the pool of Bethesda, he renovated with strength the nerveless limbs of the paralytic, doing what the angel would have done, if the sufferer had been immersed in the waters whilst stirred with healing undulation. And this is the only instance in which Christ coming among a multitude of distempered persons, cured only one; and the reason seems to be, he did neither more nor less than the descent of the angel would have effected, to shew that he was the true Bethesda, the house of mercy, with its efficacious pool. In like manner, after feeding the five thousand with loaves and fishes, he directed their view to himself as the bread of life, the real manna that came down from heaven; and thus, when Siloe's waters were poured on the altar, Christ exalting his voice, to reach the dense throng of worshippers, offered them an exuberant supply of the Spirit. When the Saviour pronounces his sweet promises of the Spirit, he frequently uses powerful imagery, to intimate the copiousness of that divine influence he is ready to communicate. Thus, when addressing the woman of Samaria, he declares that the water which he would give her, would be in her a well of water



springing up to everlasting life. Such abundance is promised, that it will not be necessary to inspect the well carefully to see if it contains any water; it will bubble or leap upwards like the aspirations of a heaven-born soul, and rise in jets that fall down, cooling and fertilizing the ground, proclaiming the copiousness of the well. The amplitude of divine grace given us will announce the reality of his work in our souls, and enable us to achieve great things for those around us. And Christ seems, while uttering this promise, to have verified it, by striking out in the bosom of the Samaritan woman such a perennial supply of living water as reached many others whom, by her impassioned address, she brought to the Saviour.

Many are afraid that their culpable carelessness during their unregenerated state, especially if they have launched into open excesses, will preclude their obtaining much living water; but, to a woman of notorious profligacy, an overflowing well was promised. If therefore Christ, in promising the Spirit, used imagery which intimated a most prodigal communication of his gifts and graces, it must not be from any unwillingness in him to bestow, but owing to some glaring defect on our part, if we are imbued with only a limited degree of his operations. And this will appear the more evident, if we remember, that the Father has entrusted the dispensation of the Spirit to Christ; Acts ii. 33—"Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed down this which ye do now see and hear." Hence, he is represented as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, enriching them with his holy oil, as an emblem of his replenishing the Churches with the Spirit. Now, it is surely a most significant circumstance, that the seven spirits of God are lodged for communication to us in the human hand of Christ, even in the hand that was pierced with a nail. He stretched out his hand to be fastened for us to the accursed tree, and, during six long dreary hours, he allowed it to be extended in ignominy for our well-being; and if he held it out to be perforated and gashed, that blood might issue out from it for us, will he be slow to dispense from that hand the seven spirits of God? From that hand the blood trickled for six successive hours, and he was willing that every drop should, if necessary, be emptied from its veins, that he might complete our redemption, and cry, "it is finished;" and if he gave out of his hand that precious blood in such unrestricted effusion, is he disposed to grant, in less limited abundance, the vital aid of the seven spirits of God, deposited in it? A gift placed in such custody, and purchased for us at such a price, he does not wish to bestow in a niggardly manner. God the Father is willing it should be conferred, seeing it has been put by him

into the hand of the friend of sinners, who died for their benefit. We should, therefore, bring our vessels to him to be filled, as the impoverished widow of the prophet carried a number of vessels to be replenished with oil, at the bidding of Elisha; every successive article she brought was filled, and the stream of oil did not cease running from him till the vessels ceased to be laid before him. If we say, our souls are not satisfied, our vessels remain empty; the reason is, that when Christ is pouring in the floods of oil, we take them away from beneath him, the oil stops running into the vessels, not that his hand is removed from them, but that the vessels are removed from his hand.

It will not do to ascribe the slender measure of Divine influence, which at present replenishes the necessities of the Church, to the sovereignty of God. There is a spontaneous operation of sovereign grace, when God at any time enriches the Church with his spiritual influence; but the Holy Ghost is never withdrawn, unless some provocation incurs the forfeiture. There is sovereignty in the first conferring of the Spirit; but there is not mere sovereignty, there is displeasure at gross misconduct on the part of the Church, when he is withdrawn. When the fire first comes down from heaven on our altars, there is free mercy; but when the fire is quenched, or waning away to its extinction, there is culpable neglect. God lighted a candlestick at the Church of Ephesus, and long did it shed a reviving glow, in a city that had been devoted to the grossest idolatry; but, when it was to be taken out of its place, it was because they had forgotten their first love. There was sovereign grace in his planting a candlestick at Ephesus; its removal was not the result of mere sovereignty, but of anger at a marked decline in the intensity of their affection to Christ. And the element of our greatest criminality is probably unbelief. Elijah said to Elisha, that if he saw him ascend to heaven, he would be gifted with a double measure of that prophetic spirit which had actuated him; and certainly, if we do not see Christ, as triumphing in his ascension—if we do not see him as rising through the blood of the everlasting covenant—we will not acquire fresh degrees of strength and power. But if we see his ascension as an indication of God's satisfaction with his obedience in our room and stead, we will discern ample grounds for our invoking from God the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There may be much personal holiness linked with much unbelief, as to the promises of the Gospel. A man in the days of Christ's flesh might have much sanctity, but, unless when the Saviour said, "Believest thou that I am able to do this," he could respond with the energy of faith, "Yea, Lord," the miracle solicited by him might not have been wrought. And so it frequently is with us; the key of promise is in our pocket, as

in that of Christian when he was immured in Doubting Castle, but we allow it to lie unused, and continue in dispondency. And it seems particularly necessary, at the present time, when our Free Church has been organized on so scriptural a footing, that we should ask breath from the four winds, to make it the means of converting souls. Our ecclesiastical constitution may be good, but, unless we have the quickening Spirit, it will be no better than a candlestick without any oil burning in it; the candlestick may be all of gold, and decorated with pomegranates and flowers, but if it emits no flame, it is useless in the eyes of God. We read in the prophecies of Ezekiel of the temple that is to be erected at Jerusalem in the latter days; this is generally understood, by those who do not look for a personal advent of the Saviour, to usher in the millennial splendours, as emblematic of the constitution that will distinguish the Church, when the Jews are replaced in their own territory. Now, after the edifice is completed, according to the prescribed model, the healing waters issue forth, to pour their waves into the salt sea; and, since, by the providence of God, the external arrangements of our Zion are consummated, let us seek that a kindred stream of reviving influence should flow out, diffusing life and gladness. The form of the windows, and columns, and chapter in our temple, is determined; let us seek that it may be the seat and centre of a quickening energy that will pervade many lands. God has enabled us to lay out and hedge the garden in which we are to carry on our labours; our engrossing aim should now be, that the sun may illuminate its beds, that many lilies may be planted in it, so that the Son of God shall walk in the midst of it, regaled with their fragrance.

And it would be sinful to underrate our power of doing good, although we live in turbulent and distracted times, and are like to live in times of still fiercer conflict. For, even according to the view that is generally taken of the position which we occupy in the map of prophecy, there is no reason to suppose we are to be so shorn of Divine aid, as to incapacitate us from effecting much for God's honour. The witnesses are said to have power to open and shut heaven, to do what Elijah accomplished, when, at his bidding, the heavens suspended their showers for three years and a half, and when, at his prayer, they again sent down a flood of fertilising humidity. Even when clothed with sackcloth, when overcharged with sadness at surrounding evils, they are endowed with such celestial might as to turn waters into blood, and smite the earth with plagues as often as they will. Many expected that the witnesses would, ere now, have disrobed themselves of their sackcloth. Judging from the light and liberality of the present century, the sackcloth is like to be deepened, rather than discontinued; but

still, during the days of their prophecy, they will not be deserted of Him who calls them to deliver their testimony.

Our Free Church has been brought into an interesting position, in which we have before us a splendid field of usefulness, and much depends on the faith and resolution with which we may embark in the field of labour before us. Formidable difficulties frown in our way, and our temptation will be to look more at the barriers in our path than to the omnipotent strength that is promised—more to the fury of the winds and waves, than to the might of him who walks on the waters; and if this is our unbelieving frame, we shall achieve little for the extension of Christ's kingdom. Yet God has equipped us with important advantages, and an awful responsibility lies on us if we follow them not up. We are like the Israelites, when called upon to possess Canaan; we have a great work before us, and much of the comfort and well-being of the generations that follow us, may depend on the degree to which we avail ourselves of our present resources, and push our present advantages. Let us rise up and drive out the Anakims from the mountains. It is generally said, that no generation that ever figured in Israel was stained with fewer faults, and dignified with more excellencies, than that which overrun the Promised Land, and dispossessed its original inhabitants; and yet it is questionable, whether more evil did not flow from what they left undone, than good resulted from what they did accomplish. Armed with the Omnipotent aid of Jehovah, they were told to displace the whole seven nations, and appropriate the undivided territory of Canaan. They did much, yet, by sparing a remnant who became tributary to them, they left those who proved to their posterity thorns in their sides, and pricks in their eyes; had they fully executed the commands of Jehovah, these incentives to sin would have been withdrawn. And if we do not follow up our present advantages, it may be, that what we neglect to do, shall prove more injurious to our posterity, than all the good we are able to perform may benefit them. If all the Israelites had evinced the same soaring faith and intrepid courage which distinguished Caleb, the land would have been swept clean of its former corrupt possessors, and no vitiating remnant would have been tolerated. He had, thirty-eight years before the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, evinced the most undoubted confidence in God's ability to invest them with the full blessings promised. He said, "Let us go up at once and possess the land;" not "Let us attempt its subjugation." Where there is faith, God generally brings it into full exercise; and, accordingly, that principle which was lodged in him during his whole journeyings in the wilderness must be evolved into open exhibition. When the distribu-

tion of Canaan therefore was going on among the various tribes, Caleb asked as his allotment, the mountainous district around Hebron, peopled by the Anakims, or sons of the giants. He did not ask it merely on condition that these formidable antagonists were dislodged from it—he wished it to be assigned him as it was, though occupied by men of colossal stature. The Israelites seem to have trembled at them more than at any portion of the Canaanitish community; and he, to assuage their fears, appears to have said, after the spies had traversed the Holy Land, that he would willingly take the region inhabited by them as his portion, and engage to drive them out in dependance on God's aid. He lived to ask that interesting district and accepted it, assured it would be his as much as if he had already possessed it; and it is recorded that he drove them out, so that none of Canaan's former occupants were more completely ejected than the gigantic race, at whom the spies trembled as they beheld them stalking in the majesty of apparent irresistible might. The wreck and remnants of those who survived the overthrow of the rest, deserting their own domain, sought refuge at Gath. It is said of others, that they could not expel the Canaanities in special localities, because they had chariots of iron—that is, their faith was unequal to such an undertaking; but Caleb had the faith that could remove mountains. A man of great faith accepts the difficult post, and thus honours God. The unshrinking boldness which made him seek the arduous enterprize of dislodging the Amalekites, is congenial with the faith which has made many a missionary select as the sphere of his operations a spot amongst barbarous and uncivilized nations, where the power of the enemy seemed most strongly concentrated, as when Vanderkemp went to the Hottentôts to proclaim the divine message. Where there were sons of Anak, there was a mighty son of Caleb.

Fuller remarks, that many devoted missionaries, who have surrendered the comforts of life, and successfully planted the standard of the gospel in the wilds of paganism, have leant on this promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world,"—gathering from it anticipations of splendid success, while others have reaped from it but slender encouragement. Let us, therefore, go forth on the great enterprize of evangelising this and other lands, armed with the faith that subdues mountains, and convinced that nothing shall be impossible for us.

And should the spirit be given us, not so much to produce a great accession of converted members to our protesting community, as to enhance the zeal and spirituality of those already united to it—to nerve them with vigour for suffering, we need not despair. God has already placed our Free Church on an eminence, that, by the hallowed sacrifices of its ministers and people, a brilliant specimen of grace may be ex-

hibited, and a higher standard of devotedness enforced on the Christian world; and he may keep us on a commanding pinnacle, not so much that we may do great things by our active exertions, as by our self-denial and patient endurance. Should this be the arrangement of Providence, a glorious field of usefulness is still presented to us. There were two churches which, in the days of the apostle Paul, were subjected to the ordeal of greater persecution than any others, viz., the Church of Judea and the Church of Thessalonica; and none seem to have ministered more largely than they to the well-being of Christ's followers. From the persecuted Church of Judea, there were scattered abroad everywhere men preaching the Gospel, and propagating the glad tidings of salvation; and out from the Church of Thessalonica sounded the word of the Lord, so that Christians who had received grace long before, were stimulated to new vigour. "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word, in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only to Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." Believers in Macedonia and Achaia were fired with new ardour in witnessing the complicated tribulation of the Thessalonians, and observing the joy in the Holy Ghost which brightened their sorrows; and, though this afflicted church does not appear to have sent forth many champions of the cross, like that of Judea, it accomplished much good by the spectacle of its magnanimous courage under persecution, so that Paul observes, that wherever he steered his course to plant the tree of life, or revive the drooping churches, the intelligence of their holy walk and conversation preceded him, communicating an invigorating impulse wherever it travelled. It was not the sound of their words but the sound of their works, of "their faith to God-ward" that rung over the habitable globe. A similar sound has emanated from the Free Church, and been reverberated over the Christian world. Whatever vicissitudes of fiery persecution may befall us, even though our preachers were to be imprisoned, and our ministers silenced—the holy sound of our faithful doings for Christ cannot be hushed, if we provoke not the Spirit to leave us to defection and decay; yea, though the sound of our words were completely put down, the sound of our unshrinking steadfastness might become the louder; the voice of our verbal appeals and solemn messages, if made to cease altogether, might be more than compensated by the voice of our undaunted suffering, and the cry of our martyred blood.

## SERMON XXXIX.

SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH THORBURN, INVERNESS.

"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised:—turn thou me, and I shall be turned."—JER. xxxi. 18.

IN early youth, we cannot avoid hearing much on the subject of affliction. As we are making our way forward to mature life, we perceive countenances sad, and we are often told, though it affects us little, that the time is coming when we shall be taught, as all others have been, that this is a suffering world. And whether we look into our Bibles, or read the records of those who have taken note of the history of our race, our attention is drawn to the fact, that none are exempt from the common lot. The child has been accustomed to look upon the countenance of maternal love, and, strange to tell, without any evidence of sickness or of bodily suffering, it bears the marks of anguish, and the big tear is stealing down that cheek which, till now, has been gladdened with a smile.

Many are the kinds of affliction with which men are visited, and various are the purposes the Lord has to serve in sending trouble to his people. And no man may wisely say to the man who is afflicted, "Why grieveest thou?" as if his trouble were of such a kind that he had no ground for lamenting.

In the providence of God, this congregation, within these few weeks, has been largely visited by affliction.\* In several of your families, the Lord has been teaching you the lesson of your frailty and liability to death. We would, in the strength of God, endeavour to speak a word in season to such sufferers, and not to them alone, but to such as have had experience of similar visitations, and, indeed, to all, as in the body, and therefore subject to trouble.

Now, in regard to souls which are truly exercised with the Lord's dealings, the words of the text will be the expression of their state of mind. While the affliction is recent—at the first burst of it—most are not able to do more than to submit to the award of the Lord, and to say,

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\* November 1844.

*The will of the Lord be done.* Such was the spirit of the sisters of Lazarus, when they saw Jesus,—*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Whatever may be the ultimate feelings accompanying trouble, *for the present it is not joyous, but grievous.* But, when the hurricane, so to speak, has passed over—when the soul looks around and contemplates what God has done—it is the reflection and prayer of those who are in the Lord, *Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised : turn thou me, and I shall be turned.*

In endeavouring to improve the present season of trial, we would, from the text before us, consider—

I. The acknowledgment made by the people of God in times of trouble ; and

II. Some of the uses which attend sanctified affliction.

I. The acknowledgment made by the people of God in times of trouble.

1st, Under this head we remark, there is an acknowledgment that the affliction is from the Lord.—It is but too true, that many are chastened, or visited with affliction, who either do not know the source of it, or do not take heed whence it comes. They smart under their affliction, whether approaching them in the form of poverty, reverses, or death ; nay, some are much cast down by them ; but they do not connect them with the Supreme Disposer of events. Mistake me not. I do not speak of avowed unbelievers—of such as, if questioned, would say, that they are persuaded that the Supreme Being takes no cognizance of the petty affairs of men. It is of those who would warmly and heartily repudiate such a statement as irrational, and opposed, not only to their judgments, but their feelings too. But those now adverted to are such as practically receive their trials, as indeed they do their comforts and mercies, without connecting them with God as the source. Affliction does indeed produce an impression of a stronger kind upon them than prosperity. It stuns them, and we are willing to admit that, for the moment, there may be a reflection of something like a Divine cause being the author. But this reflection (reflection is too strong a term—it is a mere passing shadow of a thought)—this reflection goes off, and is succeeded by a sort of feeling of fatalism—a conclusion that it is our lot—we have suffered loss—we have been deprived of what we loved—we have been bereaved—and, under these circumstances, we must bear as men what we cannot help, and continue the labours of life, which have for a time been interrupted. The path of life is resumed. New occupations, new pleasures, new cares, come in, and the remembrance of the affliction is avoided as what tends to do nothing else than to introduce painful and gloomy



ideas. It stands forth, in the record of memory, as an event by itself, having no relation to any cause, and leaving no effect of a moral kind behind to prove that it has occurred.

Such is the manner in which many receive affliction; and this, we need scarcely say, is not the way in which it should be received, or indeed is received, by the people of God. So far from this, their language—the language of their hearts—is, *Thou hast chastised me—thou hast afflicted me—the Lord hath done it*—it was no chance that visited me—no concurrence of events without the direction of Jehovah—it was thine arm which launched the dart that reached my heart—*JEHOVAH hath done this*—it was *Thou* that didst cast down the accumulations which I had raised by honest industry—it was *Thou* that didst take Rachel from my bosom—it was *Thou* that wouldst have my Isaac—the *Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.* \*

But it is to be observed that this is only one of the aspects in which Divine Providence appears to the devout mind. In every event, it distinguishes Him without whom a *sparrow cannot fall to the ground*. It beholds Him in its joys, its blessings, in the daily recurrence of numberless and undeserved comforts; and when the clouds gather, and troubles come, thick and severe, this also is God, in the exercise of his wisdom, power, and love, administering discipline to the soul.

Indeed, it is this observation of Providence—this more than observation—this connecting of every event with God—which forms the distinguishing difference between the world and the believing Christian. More especially is this feature in the believer's character noticeable in times of trouble, because it is then especially that men are led to reflect and to pause. And it is this circumstance—this perception of God, as connected with affliction—which imparts to the afflicted an air of something more than solemnity and seriousness, as if the man had sustained a loss—were deprived of what was agreeable to him. It invests him, in some measure, with a character which inspires awe. He knows that God has been dealing with him. He feels in his spirit, as it were, the call of the Lord to him, "*Be still, and know that I am God.*"

And yet, on this part of my subject, let me offer a word of counsel to the people of God. It is true that you believe that all afflictions come from the Lord. It is true that you would most cordially reject any allegation to the effect that your troubles were to be traced to any other source. Ah, beware, dear friends, of resting satisfied with this as a part of your creed. Take care lest you do no more than in words acknowledge that the Lord is the author of your trouble.

2d, There is an acknowledgment that there is a necessity for improvement. This is the direction which the gracious soul takes, when

its affections are in the way of being sanctified. It is submissive: it cannot question the act of the Lord: it is solemnized. But it is more than all this. There is a disposition, and there is a desire, to make the dispensation an instrument of spiritual benefit and glory to God. To this spirit and exercise believers are brought by several considerations.

*First*, There is the consideration that the Lord does nothing in vain. If matters which scarcely ruffle the surface of the mind are to be viewed as sent of God for a purpose, shall we fail to mark His hand in those which agitate it throughout, which stir its depths? By this event, which the Lord hath brought about in my worldly circumstances, or in my family, he has made a tumult to arise in my soul. Can I regard this in any other light, than as pointing to some great, some important purpose in my moral condition? And, truly, this arrestment which has been made upon the even course of events, has displayed the necessity of dealing with my soul.

*Second*, There is the consideration that this is the declared purpose of the Lord in the visitations of trouble. He calls his afflictions chastenings. He likens himself to a father, whose children are wayward and foolish, and apt to go astray. He chastens them to correct their disobedience, and to stimulate their activity. *In all their afflictions, He is afflicted.* He says to them at times, when they are not improved by what he hath sent, *why should ye be stricken any more?*

He compares himself to a refiner. *I sit as a refiner.* The furnace is affliction. It were a waste of the labour employed, to see them come forth from that furnace, clogged and mixed up with that dross, to separate them from which the furnace was prepared.

*Third*, There is the consideration, that improvement and reformation have been the effects produced by chastisement upon many. Not only have many with the Psalmist found, and left it on record, that it *was good for them that they were afflicted*, but they have specified the several peculiar benefits which were made to accompany it to be the fruit of it. And those who have left this testimony are not such as have been living without God, nor such as had been low in their Christian attainments, but men who have advanced far as compared with others in the divine life.

*Fourth*, There is a felt necessity for improvement, as well as experience derived from affliction in the past. There is a felt necessity—there is a state of mind induced in seasons of affliction, calculated to render men more observant of their true condition than at other times.

The hurry of the world is oft-times hushed—the idol we were wont to worship has been removed—we stand, it may be, in the presence of the

dead—a voice is heard as if from the tomb, “even to this ye also must come.” The concurrence of events like these, blessed and directed by the Spirit of God, produce that state of heart we have mentioned—an acknowledgment of the necessity of improvement. And this, too, is very needful. Ah, they permit a most useful season to glide by, who do not attain to this state of mind. *Correct me, O Lord, but not in thine anger. Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: turn thou me, and I shall be turned.* And I would here observe, that we may be able to discover some peculiar end which the Lord would bring about by these his chastisements. There is a purpose in affliction, in each, in all affliction, in the nature of it, in the extent of it, in the duration of it. It does not follow because an individual, or a family, have been afflicted, that they have been sinners above all others. *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because their blood was mingled with their sacrifices? I tell you nay. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay.* But it may be fairly concluded by others that they have something to learn—it may be inferred by themselves. They may not know it. They may require to come to God to be instructed in the matter. They may require to come saying, *Shew me, O Lord, why thou contendest with me!* But I believe it has been admitted by all sufferers, not merely that they required the discipline of affliction, speaking generally, but that they needed that peculiar and special affliction, to accomplish a certain and now ascertained end—an end which was indicated by the affliction wherewith they had been visited. Not that they would allege that no other discipline could have produced this effect, but they perceive a wisdom in that which is employed of the Lord.

And thus we attain to a second point in this subject. While the children of God refer all affliction to the hand of the Lord, they also are led, when in affliction, to ask what is that purpose for which it hath been sent, and to seek some benefit from this visitation of the Lord.

## II. Consider some of the uses of sanctified affliction.

1st, Thus do believers become intimately acquainted with their God. God is then set before them in various aspects. Let us mark two of the most prominent of these.

*First*, He appears to the afflicted in the character of a sovereign. God is a sovereign. He possesses indisputable authority to do what he wills with his own, and all things throughout the universe are his. *He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.* We are to remember that his authority, though

absolute, is not capricious. There is nothing sent to you, O suffering believer, which has not been weighed in the counsels of absolute wisdom. You are not under Fate, you are under Jehovah, and he is perfect wisdom, perfect holiness, and perfect love.

But then, he *will* have his purposes carried through. Many a time the saint on earth would conclude that it is in this way, and this way alone, that the cause of the Lord can be promoted—that it is, for example, by giving the Church peace and outward prosperity through her bounds: but the Lord's way is different in accomplishing the good of his heritage. He allows persecution to rage, and his people are scattered through all lands. This individual appears very necessary for the Church's benefit—he is possessed of consummate wisdom to make his way through conflicting difficulties, along with unyielding boldness, untiring zeal and assiduity—he seems raised up by the Lord for the time in which he lives, and the place he occupies. In a night he is removed, when, so to speak, he is the centre round which the system of usefulness with which he is connected revolves. This object is very dear to you; yea, most dear among all—*all* things of earth. You seek to keep it in its right place. You beseech God that this (I shall not call it idol, for it is not) may be spared. But the Lord approaches—Oh! remember it is Jehovah—and, passing by the various objects which you think you would be content to part with, takes to himself that which on all accounts you find you have most difficulty in parting with. Thus are you taught the sovereignty of Jehovah,—that he *giveth none account of his matters*; thus are you made to defer to that higher knowledge of what is best which belongeth to Jehovah. There is often little else than the belief of the divine sovereignty which the believing soul has to rest upon in the time of affliction.

Wilt thou murmur because God acts thus? For thyself? He can supply the place of that which has been removed, with a blessing a thousand-fold more precious. For the Church? He who dismissed Wicliffe, in what seemed a trying time for England, raised up Luther, whose gospel-torch flamed not over England only but Europe. For those who are taken away? Wouldst thou, if thou couldst, withhold them from the more exalted honours of the upper sanctuary? Wouldst thou have them utter in imperfect language the praises of God here, when they may join the choir of saints and angels before the throne above?

*Second,* He appears to the afflicted in the character of a Comforter.

The principle of the Divine government in regard to affliction may be thus defined: It is a discipline of love, necessary as a means for purifying and perfecting the people of God. It is represented to us as an instrument in the hand of God which he wields (speaking after the

manner of men) with reluctance. *He afflicteth not willingly.* It is an exercise of authority and necessary discipline which he engages in with feelings similar to those with which a parent proceeds to chastise a very dear child. Now, it might be concluded, if this really be the mind of the Lord in reference to chastisement, there should also be on his part the putting forth of that consolation and comfort which are not incompatible with the exercise of his discipline. Know you of any intelligent and affectionate parent who will administer discipline without making his child acquainted with the fact that it is necessary, and who does not comfort while he punishes? Thus it is with God. It is not more true that affliction is the portion of his people, than that a Comforter is provided for them—a Comforter who in every age shall be found discharging that office to the church and to every member of it. If the *standing office* of the Comforter indicates the existence of suffering in every age, as indeed it does, the same fact most assuredly indicates the blessed truth, that affliction is not more truly the portion of the Lord's people than comfort is. The blessed Comforter presses upon the consideration of the sufferer that he is under the afflicting hand of a kind father—displays to him what need he had of this chastisement—reveals to him much in him that requires to be corrected, and gradually produces in the soul a quiet peace and acquiescence with the will of the Most High; so that, if the affliction should have been carried so far that, in the language of the Psalmist, he should say, *My feet had almost gone*, yet the believer is enabled, through grace, to join with Paul in his experience, and to testify to the kindness of God: *We are troubled on every side, but not distressed—we are perplexed, but not in despair—persecuted, but not forsaken—cast down, but not destroyed.* Nor is it to be omitted that, when affliction is sent of the Lord from quarters unlooked-for, from tracts dry and unlikely as the wilderness itself, the Lord supplies comfort, so that in various ways his people are kept from absolutely sinking,—*their goings are upheld* till they have passed through their *fight of affliction*.

One effect resulting from these two manifestations of the Divine character is, that those who have been in affliction come out of it awed and penetrated with a deep sense of the Lord's kindness. I believe all who have seen much of the devout afflicted, will bear testimony to the fact, inexplicable on the grounds of the world's philosophy, but plain on the principles of the Divine administration, that a predominating feeling on the part of those who fear God is that of deep and adoring love and gratitude. And herein is seen a matter of wonder in the lives of God's saints, that while his continued loving kindness induces a spirit of humility and abasement, *the goodness of God leadeth to repentance*—

the chastisements of his hand are followed by thankfulness and blessing. *Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.* While we are without chastisement, we hear of the mercy of the Lord ; when we are visited with trouble we know it experimentally. \* 2d, Believers, when in affliction, know experimentally the value of their Saviour.

*To them that believe Jesus is precious,* but he is pre-eminently so to suffering saints. Their only access to fountains of comfort is through him. Why do they regard their visitation as a chastisement, and not as a judgment, but because their beloved has reconciled them to their Father whom they had offended? *He is our peace.* And in effecting this blessed result, he became a voluntary sufferer. He submitted to all that, of his own choice, which we feel to be so painful to us by the appointment of Jehovah. He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; for in no other way could we obtain forgiveness of sins and access into the presence of the Lord. For our sakes he became poor, afflicted, deserted of friends, subject to death ; and thus we were made rich in the love of God—blessed friends of God, partakers of a spiritual and heavenly life. Can we look upon the character of affliction in relation to the people of God, without being led to reflect on him who has so blended it with spiritual blessedness ?

And while we have no claim to offer on account of which we should expect favour and tender love from the Lord, our great High Priest, set apart of his own choice in this also, maketh continual intercession in our behalf. And when hearts are so shrouded in sorrow that they can feel nothing but their own distress, he shifts not his position at the right hand of the Father, nor does he intermit his earnest and all-prevalent intercession ; and he does not merely perform an official duty—he does it with his heart—yea, with a deeply sympathizing and tender heart. *We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.* He came down from heaven to earth, to die for sinners, to fulfil all righteousness. He had another errand. He visited the world, and became an infant, and a man, and a poor man, and a sufferer, that he might by experience—Oh ! vast mystery—learn what his people actually endure in their passage towards their Father's house. And when he ascended up on high to his Father and our Father, he carried with him the heart which had learned the weight of affliction by experience, and he is continually acted upon by that experience in his pleadings and supplications for his suffering people on earth. *For in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.* And though he is now

parted from them for a while, he hath taken care that *his Spirit shall abide with them* as long as they are here, and that his consolations shall be sufficient for all their many and recurring necessities.

3d, By affliction believers are weaned from the world.

This is the result of their consideration of the Lord's dealings with them, and the work of his Spirit in them. Affliction of itself will not wean us from the world. Some it only glues more closely to that which is left. But when the solemn question upon a trial or a bereavement is, "What meaneth the Lord by this?" the effect is necessarily happy and useful. The meditation leads to the conclusion, that these objects we have lost are but creatures—that as creatures they must be regarded—and that God must have the first place in our affections and hearts.

It is then, too, we learn we have been living in a vain shew. We have been attaching a false character to the creature. We have been regarding it as best, or satisfying, or lasting. But when God takes it away, we are taught *its* true character and *our* most grievous mistake. We are made to view it under altered circumstances, and according to the light which God imparts to us. We then find that we were deceived by false appearances.

Sanctified affliction does not disgust the souls of believers with creatures, it only corrects their mistakes in reference to them. The unsanctified sufferer sees all things in affliction with a jaundiced eye. Nature is clad in sackcloth, *vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. The sanctified sufferer sees all things with a corrected and cleared eye. He sees them as they are. He does not feel, he dare not allow himself to think, that there is nothing in the world calling for thankfulness, or inviting to active exertion, because some beloved object hath been removed, or some favourite scheme laid in the dust.

Hence a special benefit arises to the children of God. That which remains, and which before, it may be, was little esteemed—yea, counted as nothing—that which, if nature were listened to, would either be left an object of neglect, or come to occupy the place of that which has been taken away—(the niche in the temple is vacant, craving another idol)—that which remains, I say, comes to occupy a right position; experience and the blessing of God forbid it being put in an idol's place. In the case of the world's votary, his idols are lost, and he has nothing left. In the case of the believer, his idols are gone, and now he recognises many creatures fraught with true blessings, which the love of his idols prevented him from valuing as he ought.

4th, By affliction believers are quickened in the performance of duties.

First, They are quickened in the duties which they owe peculiarly to God.

They are quickened so as to be more serious and frequent in their thoughts of God. They consider Him with whom they have to do. They regard themselves as under his eye and responsible to him. It is their affliction which has brought them to this. They feel now as if they lived in a world wherein Jehovah doth reign. They have recently heard his voice, and felt his rod. Such as have recently been in affliction, or are so now, speak without affectation as if there were a God. Few would call a man a hypocrite for doing so at such a time.

They are quickened so as to inquire after him in his word. There is, it is true, a sort of superstitious fleeing to the word, which is to be noticed in ungodly persons in the time of affliction. It is not of this I speak in relation to the true Christian when afflicted. It is because God is more in his thoughts, that the word is more in his hands. It is because he needs the Lord more than he needs the word more. It speaks of God. It speaks of Him worthily—in such a way as God would have himself spoken of. It is God speaking of himself. It is God displaying his character, and shewing what he is to all, but especially to the afflicted. Therein they learn the uses of sanctified affliction—the good the saints of God have received from it—the spirit they have shewn while it continued—and the promises made to such as are under the rod. And on this point I shall add this remark, that the experience of the people of God is, that there is a fulness, as well as an adaptation of truth to the circumstances of men in affliction, to be found in the Scriptures, which it requires affliction to discover and appreciate. A large portion of the Psalms was written at the time, or immediately after a time, of affliction.

They are quickened in prayer. Even such as know not God, in a time of trouble find their way to a secluded place, and to their knees. Before the ship goes down in the storm, it generally happens that the greatest scoffers on board become believers in the fact that prayer is heard. And those who are in health, and do not pray, should take a lesson from this, and not neglect or despise what they will be glad to get leisure and strength to do some day. But it is of God's children we now speak. In affliction they are diligent in prayer. They do not *then* bind themselves to certain stated seasons. They find that whenever their faith is like to fail, or their spirits to droop, it behoves them to have recourse to God. *They give themselves to prayer.* They are more in the practice of prayer, and more in the spirit of prayer. They pray after another fashion. They pray as the needy to the God who hears. Their doubts about prayer, and their distractions, have been dispelled by affliction;—affliction is to these what the breeze is to the fogs, it sweeps them all away. Then God's children are ashamed of



their dull, sluggish applications made in times past. They pray, waiting for an answer. *I wait for the Lord*;—it is not enough to say, I have uttered the words of prayer.

*Second*, They are quickened in their duties to others. Sanctified affliction is very far from being the selfish thing which it appears to be. It creates a tender feeling for others. If you wish to have true sympathy, go to those who have been afflicted. There is a kind of family feeling among God's afflicted ones. *He setteth his afflicted people in families*. They whose afflictions have been sanctified, seek to communicate their own comforts to their fellow-sufferers. *They comfort them by the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God*. They rejoice to open up those streams of comfort whence they have drank and been refreshed. Can you conceive of any of God's children satisfying themselves with the comforts of the gospel in a time of distress, without a desire to share them with others?

\* They whose afflictions have been sanctified, carry the cases of others as well as their own to a throne of grace. Never do we remember others more heartily than when we have been afflicted. Affliction quickens the memory as well as softens the heart.

And then, too, we become more faithful. That false shame, which makes us almost offer an apology to dying creatures when speaking to them about God and death, is overcome. It is a more serious matter to see people die unprepared than to be marked out by the world as guilty of an ill-timed remark,—a trespass upon the most correct rules of politeness. Many, therefore, are the blessings connected with this discipline of the Lord's hand. His people are brought to be more acquainted with him—they set a higher value upon the Saviour—they are weaned from the world—they are quickened to the performance of duty.

And now, beloved friends and sufferers from the Lord's hand, let us urge upon you to seek the benefit of this your time of trial. All times and seasons have their duties and responsibilities; this is an important season for you. May you have the consolation of the Spirit the Comforter, and may the result of your trials be increased assiduity in Divine things, and a growing likeness to the Lord. May it appear evident to all that *you have not been stricken in vain; that the Lord has chastised you, and you have been chastised*. May you be able to say, from experience, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." Amen.

## SERMON XL.

## THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

BY THE REV. ROBERT BRYDEN, DUNSCORE.

"We all do fade as a leaf."—ISAIAH lxiv. 6.

THE tender, fragile leaf is but a brief and passing appendage of the age-enduring tree. But every object in nature reads a spiritual lesson to man, and, in the decay of vegetation, we may discern a striking emblem of our frail and mortal state. The mighty oak, rearing its lofty boughs to heaven, and striking its roots deep and firm into earth, withstands the storms of a thousand winters; but it casts and renews its foliage every year. The leaves by which it is clothed and adorned are only the survivors of a few fleeting months, for they bud with spring and with autumn die. And what is man—what is each individual—but a transient, fading leaf on the mighty tree of the human race—that tree which was planted in paradise, by the hand of God, "wholly a right seed," but was soon struck with the fatal blight of sin, and has become unto him as a strange and degenerate vine? Corrupt as it is, however, the trunk remains, and has waxed so mighty and so great as to fill and to people the whole earth; but the leaves are ever changing and falling away, for we come forth as a flower and are cut down, we flee also as a shadow and continue not. God has appointed us our bounds which we cannot pass, and the place which now knows us for a little season shall soon know us no more for ever. Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? No: they fulfilled their day, and then fell from their stems. They flourished for a little moment, and passed away with their respective generations, and have all gone to their last and great account. So true and so just is the emblem of the prophet, that we all do fade as a leaf. But as death is the wages of sin, our iniquities are the wind which thus takes us away.

Let us, then, pursue for a little this simple and instructive metaphor, and seek to realise the solemn lesson which it preaches to us. The fall of the leaf indicates the last and closing season of the revolving year, announcing that "the harvest is past and the summer is ended"—that

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the earth has already yielded her strength, and that the latest traces of her beauty are fast withering away. In short, the faded leaf, now dead upon its branch, or torn from it by the blast, and swept away upon the bosom of the flood, proclaims that it is winter, and that the entire vegetation of another season has come and gone, and is now past and dead. Only a few short weeks ago, we saw the forest, in all its bright and waving verdure, bearing testimony at once to the magnificence and to the exuberant riches of nature. And now, the scene is altogether changed into bleakness, and barrenness, and utter desolation. Every character of summer and its loveliness has departed, and, in as far as respects the present year, has departed for ever. We have seen the flowers bloom and die. We have seen the leaves expand and wither. We have witnessed the rise and the fall of another generation of the vegetable tribes. We have marked their progress, and we have seen their decay. We have observed the tender buds of spring burst into all the gay luxuriance of summer, and we have seen them circle through all their varying hues of life and beauty, till they fell dead and discoloured from their stems, and were driven away by the stormy winds of heaven. Yes; we have witnessed once more the complete desolation of the lofty and magnificent forest! But, from the frequent recurrence of the event, we have failed to reflect on the greatness and rapidity of the change; and we manifest no feelings of surprise, that the countless millions of verdant leaves, that erewhile hung and glistened so brightly on those now bleak and naked branches, and shed such a refreshing fragrance on the passing breeze, have all perished by the blasting touch of winter, and utterly disappeared!

But all this, be it remembered, is a striking emblem of ourselves, for we all do fade as a leaf. Oh, let us listen, then, with self-application, to its deeply instructive voice. We also have our season of health and vigour—our day of life and of grace—but it is brief and fleeting, and we soon pass away with our generation, and leave our places to our children. We enjoy our happy spring, and our most precious summer of Gospel privileges. But the winter of sickness or of age is approaching, and the hand of death shall soon cut us down; and unless we be the subjects of salvation, and partakers of the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, we shall then be driven away by the furious storm of Jehovah's wrath into the gulf of endless destruction and perdition! Looking back, then, with solemn reflection, on the past, and especially on the revolution of another and now closing year, all whose vegetable strength is departed, and whose beauty is over and gone, let us read in the present aspect of nature, our own coming dissolution, and learn to pass the time of our brief sojourn here in fear and in earnest prepara-

tion for eternity. The seasons of human life, like those of the natural year, are rapidly advancing, and none can arrest or retard their progress in his own case. The mighty tree of the world, indeed, standeth ever still, but its leaves are daily fading, and continually dropping off. It has often renewed its living foliage. It has nourished, and has also consigned to the grave, its hundreds of successive generations. And we, who are now flourishing on its branches, shall soon wither, and be carried away in our turn. Only cast your eyes at this moment along the boughs of this great living tree, and you will discern many scared and yellow leaves, the sure symptoms of approaching decay. For, with how many are the spring and the summer already over, and how quickly is the dark and cheerless winter of age advancing upon all? See how the faded leaves are quivering upon their stems! The next breath of wind that passes over them shall separate them for ever from all that connects them with time! But whether it shall waft them to heaven, or sweep them into the regions of eternal darkness and woe, it is not for us to declare. They best know themselves how they have passed the time of their sojourning here, how they have employed their precious season of grace, and on what foundation they have built their hope for eternity. If they have truly believed in the Word of God, and their fruit has been unto holiness, then shall the end be everlasting life; but if they have never yet, in real earnest, given heed to the things which belong to their peace—if they have never yet gratefully received and obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him found a holy and blessed rest to their souls—if they are not yet reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, and regenerated by the work of the Spirit, then dreadful and perilous is their case, for the wilful despisers, who long persist in neglecting “the great salvation,” are seldom converted at the eleventh hour. Fear, indeed, may drive them, when death is impending, or under the awful forebodings of approaching judgment, to think of that Saviour whose grace they had long slighted, and of the God whose laws they had utterly disregarded and contemned. But, alas! this carnal fear will not change their hearts, nor transform them into new creatures. And the fear of punishment, the deprecating of hell, when the sinful indulgences of sense have passed away, is a thing far different indeed from the longings of a holy mind after the joys of heaven. Yet, although the day be far spent, it is still the day of salvation; and, however slender may be the hope of awakening such as have grown old in the service of sin, we are still warranted in addressing to them the free offers of the Gospel, and in warning them to flee from the wrath to come, if, peradventure, God will give them grace to repent. And we would urge them all the more, inasmuch as the time is so short.

But, while the emblem of the fading leaf so powerfully admonishes us of our own frailty and coming dissolution, the question is naturally suggested, why man is made subject unto death? And a deeply interesting question it is, and one which all the schools of human wisdom were never able to solve. But the holy Scriptures, on which the economy of nature furnishes a most instructive commentary, have revealed the cause of death, and pronounced it to be sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, because in him all have sinned." But the death here spoken of, let it be remembered, is *spiritual* death, of which the dissolution of the body is only one of the effects. And although, now that the mortal blight has struck it, the leaf of this earthly tabernacle must wither and fall, and the body cannot be quickened except it previously die, yet the soul may be recovered both from the actual and penal consequences of spiritual death, for the blessed means of recovery are clearly revealed in the Gospel. The Scriptures not only tell us that "death entered by sin," but they also "bring life and immortality to light." They teach us how the Son of God, in a wonderful manner, and at an infinite cost, expiated the guilt of sin for man, and how he will, by the power of his Spirit, effectually deliver from sin all that believe in his name. And to all is a personal interest in this glorious and complete salvation freely offered by the Gospel. But then, before any can accept of this offer, they must be brought under a true conviction of their own guilt and misery; and this conviction can be produced only by the power of the Holy Ghost leading them to spiritual apprehensions of the Divine nature and law. So that, in order to be freed from the *second* death, which is unspeakably the more dreadful, we must now be made free from sin, by obtaining, through faith in Christ, not only a full remission of its guilt, but an entire emancipation from its power. We must have the principles of a new nature—of a holy spiritual life—implanted and fostered in our souls. And all these momentous objects are to be accomplished and secured, in this fleeting season of our earthly existence, by the diligent improvement of our Gospel privileges. It is *now* that we must pass from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is *now* that a great experimental change is to be produced on our moral nature. It is *now* that we must come to realise that spiritual character and those holy principles and affections which are necessary to prepare and qualify the soul for the enjoyment of heavenly bliss.

The great spiritual lesson of the text then, brethren, is obvious. If we are all fading away like the leaves of autumn—if all nature admonishes us that we are frail and dying creatures—if God has so constituted the economy of the natural world around us, as to furnish a strik-

ing analogy of our own mortal state, and to read us daily lessons of it in the changes and revolutions of the year, then surely it will be our wisdom to work while it is day, and before the night of death cometh, in which no man can work. Our frailty is impressively pictured in the fading and falling leaf. But it is not enough to feel the justness of the figure, for whatever springs of the soul may be touched, all will be in vain, if the heart is not moved, and the conscience roused. We must not mistake the pleasing of the ear, or even the temporary excitement of the feelings, for the saving impressions of the Spirit, and the conversion of the soul. If life be brief and fading, we have all the more need to improve it diligently, and to realize its awful bearing on eternity. Knowing that we are every day advancing nearer to the grave, oh! how important to be daily looking beyond it, and turning our time to a spiritual account.

Consider, then, for what ends life was given you, how these ends have already been prosecuted, and to what extent they have yet been attained. Without all controversy, the most urgent business of time is to secure the salvation of the soul—to acquire the knowledge and the favour of God—to learn his truth, and to live to his glory. How much, then, of the time past of your lives has been devoted to spiritual exercises, to prayer, to searching the Holy Scriptures, to the study of your own hearts? Just let the last year of your existence be the subject of review, and say what were your spiritual views and experience at the time it commenced, and what are they now? Surely some change, either to the better or the worse, must have taken place upon your moral condition, for character is no more stationary than time—and if not improving, it must be degenerating. And it becomes you to ascertain whether you have advanced in knowledge and in grace, or whether you have been losing ground, and pursuing a careless and a backsliding path. Ah, brethren, it is certain that the progress of the year has brought every one of you nearer to death, and judgment, and eternity—and how near none of us can tell. But are you any nearer heaven—any better prepared for the solemn meeting with your God? You are more nearly being done with this world and with all its passing interests. But are your hearts more dead to it in proportion, and more decidedly and earnestly set on the things which are above? Or, just as your interest in time has been diminishing, has your love for the world been increased?

Oh! inquire—search diligently into your own spiritual condition. Much of your time has been necessarily occupied with the business of the world—and too much of it, perhaps, has been wasted in idleness and in unprofitable amusement, if not in sinful pleasure. But what

have you been doing for your souls? Is your peace made with God through Jesus Christ? Have you clearly understood, and cordially embraced, the way of salvation revealed? Are you satisfied that you are in a state of grace—that you have been effectually called and regenerated—and that God has given you the earnest of his Spirit in your heart? To assist you in answering these very weighty questions, we exhort you to consult the records of memory and of consciousness. When did you begin to think of God, and to seek him with all your heart's desire? When did you begin to pray in earnest, and to lay hold on the hope set before sinners in the gospel? When did you close with Christ as your Saviour, and begin to rejoice in him and to walk in him? Was it during any of the days or months of the immediate preceding year?—or was it at a still earlier period of your history?—or have you no recollection of ever making any personal covenant with God at all—of ever earnestly and deliberately weighing the offers of his grace, and accepting them for yourselves? Ah, this last, we fear, is the case with too many, and if it be yours, you have every reason to fear that you are still far from God, and in an unconverted, unregenerated condition. And if death should overtake you in this unpardoned and unholy state, how certain your eternal condemnation! But think of the awful folly of delaying for a single hour to take up and to prosecute the grand question of your salvation! Is God calling upon you, and do you refuse to listen to his voice? Has he sent you a message, and do you delay to examine it? Do you know that you are frail and dying men, and that your everlasting welfare depends on reconciliation to God, and restoration to holiness—on a saving interest in Christ to be now secured, and on a blessed conformity to his moral image to be now realised? And although none of these things are yet attained, and you cannot count upon to-morrow, are you sitting down satisfied and secure, as if all were well with you, and all safe for eternity! Oh, will you not shake off such fatal indolence, such sinful and perilous indifference, and flee from the wrath which is to come? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!

But the text reads a lesson to true believers also. It admonishes them that their season of usefulness will soon be over, and that now is their golden opportunity to glorify their Saviour, and serve their generation. It is a sad and miserable thing indeed, to grow old and seared in the service of sin, and to fade away, and drop into the grave after a life of total estrangement from God, as enemies to his holiness, and practical despisers and rejecters of his grace. And truly dreadful is the fading of the impenitent, the fall and death of the ungodly—it is an eternal withering and blasting of all their happiness, and of all their

hope! They may flourish for a time in worldly prosperity, but all their enjoyment is confined to this mortal state; and, having made no provision for eternity, having made no covenant of peace with God, they die in their sins, and go down to perdition. But it is not so with the righteous—it is not so with him who is converted, accepted, and sanctified. For, although he also must encounter temporal death, although his body is frail and fading, even as the flower of the grass, yet he has an unfading inheritance prepared for him in heaven. And while the ungodly, like the chaff before the whirlwind, shall be driven away in their wickedness from before the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, the spiritual man shall be transplanted among the trees of righteousness, into the garden of God above, and dwell for ever in those mansions of heavenly glory and felicity, where their leaf shall never wither. But the very consideration that we must soon fade and fall from the tree of this human life—a fact of which we are so powerfully reminded by the constant mutation of all human things, by the decay of all vegetable nature, by the havoc of winter, the shortened day and the closing year—this very consideration of our speedy decay and approaching frailty should prove a strong incentive to holy living and to diligent exertion in the work of our God. Shall we reserve only the days of fading and of feebleness—the years in which we shall have no pleasure and no power of activity and exertion, for the work of our salvation, and the service of our Redeemer! Oh! no, my dear Christian brethren, let us consecrate our strength and our best energies to the Lord. Oh, let the green and flourishing season of youth, let the vigour and maturity of manhood, be devoted to the cause of God. Let us think to serve him, not with the very dregs of our existence, but with the best of our time and of our talents. Let us seek to fill up the precious days, as they pass so swiftly over us, by deeds of holy usefulness and piety—by living to God and living for others, as well as, in a proper sense, for ourselves. With fear and trembling let us be working out our own salvation, daily watching over the progress of the work of grace in our own hearts, and seeking to be well persuaded that the Spirit of God is indeed working in us, and promoting the Divine life in our souls. And let us be daily inquiring what the Lord requires of us, and how we may best testify our love to Christ, seeking the good of our fellow-sinners for his sake. Let us remember that the time is short, and that we have much work to do—that, besides the care of our own souls, many duties press upon us, duties to our families, duties to society, duties to the Church of Christ. Truly there is no time to waste in idleness and frivolity. Ah, life is too precious to be squandered in folly and in sin. God has ample work for every one of us to do. And we cannot work



the works of God, and yet live unto the flesh, and follow the course of a profane and giddy world. Oh, it is not a time to be indulging in vanity while we are fast fading away from this mortal scene, and have souls to be redeemed, and an eternity to secure. Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, and we should be all the more anxious to put off the body of sin and death, and put on the character of heaven. If the outward man must decay, let us foster the inward and the spiritual, that when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall fall and be dissolved, we may be clothed upon with an house, which is from heaven.

## SERMON XLI.

THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE REV. JAMES BUCHANAN, D.D., EDINBURGH.

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 8.

THAT knowledge is one of the most valuable attainments which can be acquired in this world, must be evident to every one in the light of his own reason, who considers that the peculiar distinction of his nature consists in the capacity of thought and reflection,—that on the knowledge of truth depend alike the right exercise of his affections and the due regulation of his conduct,—and that, with these again, both his personal happiness and his relative usefulness are inseparably conjoined ; but it is still more manifest in the light of scripture, which represents the image of God, in which man was originally created, and to which he is restored by the agency of the Divine Spirit, as consisting in *knowledge*, as well as in righteousness and true holiness. We are taught, both by the constitution of nature and the scheme of revelation, to regard knowledge as indispensable alike for the formation of our character, and the regulation of our conduct ; and hence we are commanded and urged by every motive of interest and duty, to "incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply our heart to understanding ; yea, to cry after knowledge, to seek for her as silver, and to search for her as for hidden treasure ; to let wisdom enter into our heart, and knowledge be pleasant to our soul."

Knowledge of every kind is good in its own place, and for its appropriate end ; but were the question asked, what is the highest subject of human thought ? surely,—on the supposition of his existence, every rational mind must reply, that God,—the greatest Being in the Universe,—is the grandest subject of knowledge. It cannot but be so, if God may be in any respect known. This is one of the plainest dictates of reason itself—so plain indeed, and self-evident, that the reverse would imply a flagrant contradiction ; and hence it follows that religion, which relates to God as its subject, and views every other object in its relation to him, must of necessity embrace the highest kind of knowledge of which the human mind is capable. Mere sciolists may affect to

despise religion ; but if the real worth and dignity of our knowledge in any department depend on the subject to which our thoughts are directed, it were easy to show that the religious peasant may find a nobler subject of thought in the structure of a flower, than the irreligious philosopher finds in the structure of a world ! If this be true of religious knowledge in general, it is pre-eminently true of—the *knowledge of Christ*. For the light of nature, although valuable in itself, and sufficient to impose many solemn responsibilities, is in all respects inadequate for the instruction of those who have “been alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts ;” and hence, in the case of *sinners*, a higher knowledge is necessary, which can only be acquired from the light of revelation. It is to this knowledge that the apostle refers, when he says, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.” It is the *knowledge of Christ* of which he speaks ; not merely of what Christ taught concerning God, but of Christ himself, as “God manifest in the flesh,”—“the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person ;” exemplifying all the perfections of the divine character,—fulfilling the purposes of the divine mind,—and exhibiting in himself everything that is needful to instruct us in the highest kind of knowledge—the knowledge of God, not only as God the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Judge,—but as God the Saviour, and the Sanctifier,—as “God in Christ.” To this same knowledge the apostle refers on another occasion, in terms which, viewed in connection with his character and previous history, are strongly expressive of its pre-eminence. Paul was unquestionably the most learned, and, in respect of natural talent, the most gifted of all the apostles. He received the rudiments of a literary education from Gamaliel, a celebrated teacher of those times ; under his instructions he profited more than most of his contemporaries, and his writings show, that he was not only familiar with the Rabbinical learning which was then in repute at Jerusalem, but that he had extended his studies to the literature of Greece and Rome, from which several quotations are made in his epistolary writings. These compositions afford internal evidence at once of the culture which his mind had received, and of its native vigour and originality, displaying a capacity of loftiest conception, and a power of reasoning and illustration which might have served to place him in the highest rank of literary distinction. Yet, with all these original endowments, and with all these advantages of education, he told the educated, the polite, the luxurious people of Corinth, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He speaks, you will observe, as if this were his deliberate purpose ; not the fruit of

a temporary excitement, nor an expression of short-lived enthusiasm, but the result of calm reflection—the firm and inflexible purpose, which he was not ashamed to avow, and to which he was resolved to adhere; “I determined,” says he; it was a matter which he had taken into serious consideration, and on which his mind was made up; this was to be the end of his life—the object of his ministry—the work to which he devoted himself with untiring zeal in his private studies,—in his public preaching,—in his conversation,—in his letters,—in his prayers, “to know, and to make known Jesus Christ and him crucified.” And that subject rightly understood, affords a sufficient reason for the apostle’s determination. The more we know of it, the less shall we wonder that he determined to know nothing else. It is a subject which the maturest believer cannot comprehend in all its fulness; which “angels themselves desire to look into,” and which furnishes “to principalities and powers in heavenly places,” new manifestations and proofs of “the marvellous wisdom of God.” This was the theme which occupied the thoughts of Seraphim, when, veiling their feet and their faces with their wings, they exclaimed, “the whole earth is full of his glory”—this is the theme which fills the hearts of the redeemed around the throne, when, casting their crowns before him, they sing the song of God and of the Lamb, saying,—“blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Rev. v. 18.) And this also is the theme to which the apostle refers in those remarkable prayers for the church on earth; “Making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the richness of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” (Eph. i. 16-19.) And again, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be *strengthened with might by his Spirit* in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to *know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Eph. iii. 14-19.)

While “as yet we see only through a glass darkly,” we cannot hope to fathom the depths, or to form an adequate estimate of this knowledge; but we may yet meditate on the glorious subject, and offer some

views of its excellency, which, imperfect as they are, and vastly disproportioned to the magnitude of the theme, may still be found to afford a sufficient reason for the strong preference expressed by the apostle in the text, when he said, "I count *all* things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." It may be useful,

I. To consider what is implied in *the knowledge* of Christ, here spoken of; and

II. To illustrate its peculiar excellency and transcendent value, by applying to it the same rules by which the value of knowledge on all other subjects is usually estimated. And, while we are thus engaged, may he, whose office it is to glorify Christ, take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us.

I. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is not to be understood as limited to the facts of his personal history, but as comprehensive of the whole substance of Gospel truth. Christ's name is often used in scripture to denote *the whole* Gospel;—as when the apostle says, "We preach Christ,—Christ the power of God, and Christ the wisdom of God;" and the reason of this is, that every truth in scripture relates more or less directly to Christ, and derives its chief value and use from its connexion with his redemption. Christ is the sun in the firmament of scripture, and every other object which is there presented to our view, shines in a light borrowed from him. Christ is the glorious centre to which all the lines, whether of type or prophecy, history or parable, doctrine or precept, converge. Christ is the source whence flow all the truths which enlighten, all the rules which direct, and all the promises which cheer us in our Christian course. Christ is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of scripture, the author and finisher of our faith; and hence his name is appropriately used to denote the whole Gospel; and *to know* his name, or to *believe in* his name, is to know and believe all that is essential to salvation. In this view the knowledge of Jesus Christ is not limited to the facts of his personal history, but includes whatever is implied or presupposed in these facts, and embraces the whole system of revealed truth, whether in the Old or New Testament, every part of which has some relation to Christ Jesus the Lord;—and hence we may learn the truth and beauty of a remark once made by a very able writer,\* when, speaking of Paul's declared determination "not to know anything, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," he said, "we are not to think from this text that Paul's knowledge was confined within narrow bounds, but that the knowledge of Christ is exceeding broad." It is evident that Paul regarded the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the sum and substance of

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\* M'Laurin.

saving knowledge, and considered every other subject only in its relation to this central and comprehensive theme. In his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he said, "I kept back nothing that was profitable to you," and "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God;"—from which it may be inferred, that he addressed to them, in his public preaching, all those arguments, and exhortations, and lessons, which have been thought worthy of being recorded in his epistles, for the everlasting instruction of the church. Now, in the very epistle which contains the expression of his determination not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified, he directs their attention, notwithstanding, to a great variety of points,—some doctrinal, some practical, some historical, some typical; some of local and temporary, others of universal and permanent importance; so that we are not to suppose that he never spoke except on this one theme, but that he spoke of everything else only in its relation to that theme. This will appear in a very interesting light, if we consider the manner in which Christ is introduced in connection with every detail, whether of doctrine or practice, in the apostle's writings. It was once said of two commentators, that the one found Christ nowhere, and the other found Christ everywhere, in the Old Testament: of Paul it may be emphatically said, that Christ was ever present to his thoughts, and that he viewed every other subject in its relation to Christ. It is truly admirable to mark how, in every part of his writings, and even when he was discussing what apparently had but a slight connection with Christ, he still introduces his great theme, and makes every other topic tributary to this. Does he refer to the great principles of natural religion and the light of nature?—it is to convince the conscience, and to awaken the attention of sinners to their need of Christ? Does he speak of the past history of the world?—it is to shew that in all ages God had been preparing the world—for the coming of Christ. Does he expound the prophets?—it is to shew that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Does he comment on the Jewish ritual?—it is to shew that the substance of all the typical shadows is to be found in Christ. Does he speak of the eternal obligations of the moral law?—so far from regarding the law as an antagonist to the Gospel, he employs it as an auxiliary, and speaks of it as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;—he employs the law in its form as a *covenant of works*, to bring sinners to the Saviour, and then he draws from the doctrine of Christ and him crucified, the most constraining motives to a cheerful and unreserved obedience of the law as a *rule of life*. And this uniform regard to Christ is manifested, not only in those general summaries of truth, which contain the substance of the Gospel, but in every, even the

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*minutest detail*;—he cannot recommend charity, without speaking of the love of Christ; or express gratitude for temporal mercies, without exclaiming, “thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift;” or enjoin the common virtue of truth as opposed to falsehood, without saying to the disciples, “lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him,—where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but—*Christ* is all and in all.”—Col. iii. 11.

Christ, then, is the one grand subject of the gospel: and every thing, whether in nature, or providence, or Scripture, is to be viewed in its relation to Christ. And if it were asked, What is implied in the knowledge of Christ here spoken of? it is evident that we could not answer that question fully, without unfolding the whole scheme of divine truth, since every part of it is more or less directly related to this glorious theme. This is a task which is impracticable within our present limits: but you will have learned a great lesson, if you be duly impressed with this one thought—that *Christ* is the central subject of revelation, and that all your inquiries in every department should be directed to this end—the knowledge of Christ. This being the grand object at which you should aim, I may briefly indicate, or offer an outline, however imperfect, of the chief topics included in this comprehensive theme. To know Christ is to know him as the *Anointed One*; anointed by the Father with the Holy Ghost,—sanctified and sent into the world for the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose, bearing with him a divine commission, and in every part of his work doing his Father’s will. To know Christ is to know him in the *dignity of his person*, as Emmanuel, God with us,—God manifest in the flesh—combining in his person the infinite attributes of the divine with the highest qualities of the human nature,—“the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person,” yet made flesh, so that men could “behold his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” To know Christ is to know him *as the Saviour of the world*,—as sent to accomplish a great design,—to effect the reconciliation of God and man, by satisfying God’s justice and expiating man’s guilt, and to secure the redemption and restoration of the lost. To know Christ is to know him *in the variety of his gospel offices*,—as God’s anointed Prophet, to declare his mind and will—as God’s anointed Priest, to offer sacrifice and intercession—as God’s anointed King, to whom all power is given, in heaven and in earth, who now reigns as governor, and will ere long appear as the Judge of quick and dead. To know Christ is to know Him in the *fulness of his purchased blessings*—

as a treasury of “unsearchable riches,” as made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” To know Christ is to know him in *the riches and the freeness of his grace*—the grace which prompted him to undertake the work of our redemption—which led him to lay aside his glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was—and to leave the throne of heaven and to take his place on a cross on earth,—the grace which he displayed while he tabernacled amongst men, working miracles of mercy, healing the sick, and curing all manner of diseases among the people, and going about continually doing good, and seeking to bind up the broken-hearted, and shewing by every act of his life that his great and God-like design was to relieve the wretched, and to save the lost,—and the grace which still burns in his bosom, now that he is on the throne—and which he is ready to dispense to every sinner—under the dispensation of the Gospel. To know Christ is to know the design of his humiliation—the mystery of his cross—the meaning of his exaltation—the success of his undertaking—the efficacy of his work—the certainty and magnitude of his reward. To know Christ is to understand his character, his principles, his purposes, whether as a “man of sorrows” or as “priest upon his throne.” And finally,—to know Christ is to find in him *the substance of all saving truth*—the end of the law for righteousness—the inexhaustible source of every spiritual blessing—the fulfilment of all prophecy—the pledge of every promise—the testator of a new and better covenant—the only and the all-sufficient Saviour of every sinner that puts his trust in him.

- Such is a brief and imperfect outline of the glorious subject, which, if it serve no other purpose, may yet suffice to show how much is contained in it: and to impress your minds with the conviction, that he who knows Christ knows every thing that is necessary for the salvation of the soul.

But, *2dly*, On this head of discourse, while I speak of what is implied in the *subject* here mentioned, I must not forget to remind you of what is implied also in the *knowledge* of it. It is not *every kind* of knowledge, nor even every kind of knowledge in regard to Christ, which is of saving efficacy: many may be said to know much *about Christ*, who yet do not *know Christ himself*. For just as the enlightened heathen knew something of God, yet did “not like to retain God in their knowledge,” nay, “were alienated from God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts;”—and just as the educated Jews knew something of God from the writings of the Old Testament, yet, in the estimation of him who could look into their hearts, their views were so defective that he could say of them, “Ye neither



know me nor my Father who sent me ;”—and just as Paul knew the law as a Pharisee, having studied it at the feet of Gamaliel, yet immediately on his conversion, when the commandment came home to his conscience, was constrained to feel that till now he had been “without the law :”—and just as multitudes who saw Christ in the flesh, who heard his word and witnessed his miracles, saw him only “as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness, and no beauty wherefore they could desire him :” so it is possible—alas ! it is but too certain—that multitudes who have read the Gospel, and know a great deal *about* Christ, may yet know nothing of “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” The knowledge of which the apostle speaks was a divine, a *spiritual*, a saving knowledge of Christ. There “is a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, when the eyes of the mind are enlightened ;” and it is obviously to this spiritual and saving knowledge that Paul refers : for—it is such a knowledge as would unite him to Christ—“that I may win Christ,” says he, “and be found in him :”—as would serve for his justification in the sight of God,—“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith ;”—as would make him feel “the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings :”—and which, however imperfect at first, would grow and expand till he could “apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus.” This knowledge of Christ implies a spiritual discernment of the glory and excellency of the truth concerning him, which is imparted by the Spirit of God, when he glorifies Christ by taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned :” it is only when “he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shines into our heart,” that we perceive “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Then Christ, who was before to us as “a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness, and no beauty wherefore we should desire him,” becomes at once “the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely :” “whom having not seen, we love ; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory :” and then the “love of Christ constrains us” to say with the apostle,—“I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

As there are many who can find no God in nature, at least no God whom they can love—so there are many who find no Christ in the Gospel, at least no Christ in whom they can trust. Such men have no spiritual—no saving knowledge of Christ ;—and without this, Scriptural

learning, however extensive and profound, is but the shell without the kernel—the form without the power—the carcase without the living spirit;—it is not “the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” nor “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

II. I come now to illustrate the peculiar excellency and transcendent value of this knowledge; and in doing so I shall not compare it with wealth, or honour, or pleasure of the world, for much of the strength of Paul's statement depends on the value of those things with which it is here contrasted. These are his privileges as an educated Jew: “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” (Phil. iii. 4, 5, 6.) He mentions privileges which were far more valuable than all the wealth, and honour, and pleasures of the world; and yet prefers the knowledge of Christ before them all. I shall put these, therefore, out of view—I shall take for granted that *knowledge* of any kind is to be preferred before them all, as the peculiar distinction and proper heritage of rational and immortal minds; and admitting that knowledge of every kind is good in its own place, and for its appropriate end, I shall apply to this subject the same rules by which the value of knowledge on all other subjects is usually estimated.

1. Knowledge is excellent in proportion to the *greatness* and *dignity* of its subject. Some subjects are so inconsiderable that the knowledge of them is of little or no value; such are the anecdotes of private life, the petty details of public history, and many of the insulated facts of science, considered in themselves and apart from the principles which they involve; a mind may be filled to overflowing with such knowledge, without being materially enlarged or elevated by it, because the *subject* of its thoughts is little and insignificant. I say, the *SUBJECT* OF ITS THOUGHTS, for it is important to mark the distinction betwixt the subject of our *thoughts* and the *mere fact* or object which may give rise to them. In considering the very same *FACT* or *EVENT* we may be thinking of very different subjects;—in examining the structure of a flower, a peasant may be studying God's perfections;—in examining the structure of a world, a philosopher may be studying the mere laws of matter; and hence, I say, that the grandeur of a subject is not to be estimated by the *magnitude* of the object, but by the *quality* or *relation* which

engages and occupies the mind.\* On this principle, the humblest disciple of *Christ* may be said to be daily occupied with a nobler subject, and with loftier contemplations than ever occur to the mind of an irreligious philosopher: for, grant that his knowledge is alike extensive and profound; grant that he can explain the structure of the earth, and follow the planets in their course, and calculate the velocities and revolutions of a sublime astronomy; yet if with an *irreligious eye* he looks on the earth beneath and the firmament above, the subject of his thoughts, vast as it is, dwindles into utter insignificance, and has no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth, when brought into comparison with the knowledge of him who, looking on earth and heaven with an untutored eye, and unable, it may be, to explain their mysteries, can yet, in the spirit of religious faith and confidence, exclaim,—“ My Father made them all; ” “ the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth *His* handiwork; ”—and still more when brought into comparison with the knowledge of him who, under the teaching of the Word and Spirit, is enabled, although simple as a little child, “ to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Here is a *subject* which angels desire to look into;—a subject which occupied the counsels of God in the eternity which is past, and which will constitute the theme of exhaustless contemplation in the eternity that is yet to come;—and nothing that is *earthly*, nothing that is material, nothing that is temporary, however vast in itself, can possibly equal, or should ever come into competition with Christ, “ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

2. The excellency of any kind of knowledge depends on its *certainty*.

With regard to a matter of speculation, the mind may be dazzled, and perhaps, for a time, elevated by a splendid or happy conjecture; and with regard to a matter of fact, it may be astonished and filled with awful or agreeable surprise by a wonderful narrative; but neither in ingenious conjecture, nor in marvellous information, can it rest with satisfaction, unless the one be confirmed by experiment or observation, and the other by some credible testimony.

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\* This distinction is strongly marked by the learned Cudworth; when comparing, first of all, *what is found in the same book* by a learned man, with what is found in it by an illiterate and uninstructed reader, he adds, “ In the room of the book of *human* composition, let us now substitute the book of *nature*, written all over with the characters and impressions of *Divine* wisdom and goodness, but legible only to an intellectual eye. To the *sense*, both of man and brute, there appear nothing else in it, but as, in the other, so many inky scrawls, and nothing but figures and colours. But the mind which had a participation of the divine wisdom that made it, upon occasion of these sensible delineations, exerting its own inward activity, will have not only a wonderful scene, and large prospects of other thoughts laid open before it, and variety of knowledge, logical, mathematical, and moral, displayed; but also clearly read the divine wisdom and goodness in every page of this great volume, as it were written in large and legible characters.”

In this respect the knowledge of Christ excels all other knowledge, because, while the *gospel* presents a clear and determinate system of religious truth, its authority rests not on "the witness of man," but on the infallible testimony of God. It presents to our understanding a *clear*, and *definite*, and settled standard of religious opinion; and this of itself, apart from its evidences, entitles it to a preference over every other system which does not even profess to put the mind in possession of certainty, but leaves it afloat on the restless ocean of speculation, without an anchor to stay or a chart to direct it. But along with a definite standard, it presents INFALLIBLE EVIDENCE of the truth; that truth is proposed to us on the authority of *God* the revealer, and we are to receive it not "as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth the word of the living God." "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; and this is the witness which he testifieth concerning his Son." It is true that the witness of men has its appropriate place, and serves a subordinate purpose, in the scheme of Christian evidence, but only in a way of subserviency, and not in the least with a view to supersede the higher and surer testimony of God himself to his own truth. That truth must be received, not on human, but on divine authority; our faith must rest, not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God; and with this view God has so circumstantiated the evidence of his word, as to lay a solid ground-work for faith divine and supernatural, by incorporating in the word itself such facts and predictions as, when compared with what we *see* and *know* with infallible certainty, may well constrain us to say that "God is in it of a truth." We cannot now expound the subject of the Christian evidence;—we content ourselves with the mere fact, that whatever truth is revealed in the Bible, is proposed to us by "the God of truth;" and our faith in it may be as certain and infallible as is the testimony of Him who is omniscient, and can neither err nor deceive.

### 3. Knowledge is excellent in proportion to *its necessity*.

There are many subjects of curious research which have no bearing on the interests of mankind. They may awake the curiosity and gratify the taste of individuals, but are neither of urgent nor of universal concern. Such is the knowledge of many of the details of science and history, which has its use in enriching and adorning our minds, but is not essential to our safety or happiness. There are other subjects, again, the knowledge of which is necessary for some, while it is not necessary for all; such as is peculiar to the professional occupations in which different men are engaged, and which, out of these professions, is not essential however valuable it may be in itself.

But the knowledge of Jesus Christ is of universal and urgent con-

cern; its value is not limited to any rank or condition of life, nor is it the peculiar property of any profession: all men, as such, are deeply interested in it, and their safety and happiness, their present peace and their eternal prospects, depend upon it. It is not one of those studies which invite the attention only of the curious, and which may be neglected without guilt or danger;—it demands attention from all; it speaks to man as man, and to every man in the same language; rich and poor, young and old, illustrious and obscure, savage and civilized,—it casts out of view all these earthly and transitory distinctions, and seizing on the common attributes of men, and their universal *relation* to God—it singles out those great and awful *questions* respecting their present state and everlasting prospects, which every man who has a conscience in his bosom should seriously ponder. It singles out these questions from the multitude of human speculations;—questions in which all men without exception are deeply concerned:—What is the character of God? What interest does he take in our affairs? For what end were we created? In what state are we now placed? What is our relation to God as our Lawgiver, and Governor, and Judge? What is the cause of the misery and wretchedness which prevail under his government? Has God provided a remedy for these evils? What is that remedy? Is it sufficient—is it fully provided—is it freely offered? What must we do to be saved? By what means may we be prepared for death, and judgment, and eternity? What are our everlasting prospects? These and such as these are the *great questions* which the Gospel selects, and which it enables us to solve; and surely men who are not utterly reckless of all consequences, and forgetful of the great natural law of self-preservation, cannot fail to see the necessity, and acknowledge the excellency, of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

4. Knowledge is *excellent* in proportion to the magnitude of the evils which it averts, and the value of the benefits which it secures.

In this respect mere secular knowledge is often valuable as a means of averting or mitigating temporal calamities, and contributing to the ease, and comfort, and ornament of human life; but the knowledge of Christ has reference to interests unspeakably greater and more precious, the interests of the *soul* in its relation to God and eternity. The *evils* to which the soul is subject, and the dangers to which it is exposed, are of fearful magnitude,—it is infected with sin,—it is chargeable with guilt,—it is obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God,—it is bound over under the penalty of a broken law to a sentence of death and a righteous judgment,—it has forfeited the hope of heaven, and incurred the fear of hell, and is alike unable to find a remedy, and unwilling to seek for one; but the knowledge of Christ—while it reveals these evils

in all their magnitude, and neither hides nor disguises them from the sinner's eye, but, on the contrary, presses them on his attention, with the view of awakening his sleeping conscience, and forcing him out of every refuge of lies; the knowledge of Christ, as soon as it dawns on his benighted mind, discloses a remedy for every evil, deliverance from every danger—pardon for every sin—purification from every defilement—relief from every guilty fear—a refuge from every storm: Christ is himself the remedy: Christ is the propitiation for sin: Christ is the hiding-place for the wind: Christ is the covert from the tempest; for “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; and there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” And it is simply by the *knowledge* of Christ,—that knowledge which implies a spiritual apprehension and a cordial belief of the truth concerning him, that a sinner is delivered from the bondage of legal terror, and from the burden of guilt on the conscience, and from the reigning power of sin in the heart, and from the slavish fear of death, and from all that is terrible in the prospect of judgment and eternity. But, besides the evils that are thus averted, there are benefits of inestimable value which are secured; for, by the knowledge of Christ, we obtain peace with God—an assurance of his love—freedom of access to his throne—the present rights and privileges of his children, and a title to that glorious inheritance which is prepared for them in heaven. In Christ “all fulness dwells:” he is “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” “we are complete in him;” and we share in all the benefits of his purchase simply by the knowledge of Christ. “For this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:” and, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have access by *faith* into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” If there be a *reality* in these things, if evils so great and dangers so dreadful may be removed or averted, and if benefits of such inestimable value may be enjoyed or secured, simply by the knowledge of Jesus Christ,—how well may every immortal being unite with the apostle, and say, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

5. Knowledge is excellent in proportion to the moral *influence* which it exerts on the mind, and the practical applications of which it is susceptible in the conduct of life. Many kinds of knowledge have little or no direct influence on our character, or conduct, or happiness; there being nothing in the subjects to which they relate that is fitted to elevate our thoughts, or refine our sentiments, or regulate our desires. But,

in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, all that is useful in truth, is blended with whatever is beautiful in morals ; and both are so presented, at one time, in the form of doctrine, at another, in the way of illustration or example, that no mind can become familiarized with the Bible, without being elevated, and purified, and refined. Take, for example, the *character of Christ* himself,—a character not delineated in words, but vividly presented in the record of his words and actions ; and say, can you contemplate that *character*,—so original and peculiar, so unlike the character of this world ; can you think on his lofty sentiments—his magnanimity—his simplicity—his sincerity—his meek and lowly spirit—his compassion and gentleness—his self-sacrificing and much-enduring love—his patience and long-suffering—his forgiving temper—his inflexible truth—his intrepid faithfulness—his unwearied beneficence—his constant friendship—his supreme reverence for God—his zeal for the diffusion of knowledge—his concern for immortal souls—his frequent preaching—his fervent prayers—and, above all, his whole character as displayed in his cross : can you meditate on these things without feeling that your own character is elevated and refined by the mere contemplation of his ; and that you only need to “ see him as he is,” to become like him, and to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord ?

But the *practical applications* and *uses* of this knowledge are as important as its direct and immediate influence on the mind. The least practical kind of knowledge is useful, if it raise the mind above those sordid tendencies to which ignorance is allied ; but the knowledge of geometry is the more valuable by reason of its many useful applications to mechanical arts ; and astronomy itself, the sublimest of all the sciences, by reason of the aids which it affords to the practical art of navigation. The spiritual astronomy, which points to Christ as the morning star, gives a directory also to guide our course amidst the storms and tempests of that voyage in which we are all embarked. It lays down for our guidance a clear, simple, and comprehensive rule for the whole conduct of life, marking out the end at which we should steadfastly aim, and the means by which we should seek to attain it : and it affords us the blessed assurance that Christ himself will be our leader, and his Spirit our guide. It is applicable, not only for our *direction* in every condition of life, but also for our comfort and support in the hour of trial : imparting those blessed consolations which the world can neither give nor take away ; and even, in the hour of *death*, when all other knowledge fails, and leaves the soul to sink alone and unbefriended into eternity, this *knowledge* gives us that hope which is an anchor, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil.

Whether, therefore, we consider its direct influence on the mind, or the number and value of its practical uses and applications, we may well be willing, with the apostle, to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

6. *Knowledge* is valuable in proportion to the stability of its objects and the permanence of its use. "The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal." The use of all our knowledge must terminate at death, except in so far as our knowledge connects itself with religion. The knowledge of chemistry, in so far as it relates to mere material substances, is of no permanent value to us, since ere long we shall leave the earth and all its substances behind us: but in so far as it unfolds the laws of nature, and the wisdom of God—it teaches us a lesson which is of permanent value; and here it connects itself with the imperishable truths of religion. In like manner, the knowledge of the mere state and history of the world, is of no permanent value; since very soon the drama of human life shall close, and all shall be to us as if it had never been: but in so far as these facts of history develop the laws of thought, and the principles of morals, they afford lessons of eternal moment, and here they connect themselves with the imperishable truths of religion. Religion only, of all the forms of human knowledge, is IMMORTAL; and other sciences are valuable chiefly on account of their temporary usefulness, excepting only when they rise to *principles* and *laws*, which connect them with the Universal and Imperishable. Religion is the grand and enduring fabric; and all that can be said of science is, that in so far as it is temporary, it is used as the scaffolding; in so far as it is permanent, it furnishes some of the materials with which that noble structure is reared.

The knowledge of Jesus Christ not only relates to eternal and unchangeable realities—but is the means, the appointed and effectual means, of preparing us for the enjoyment of them. The knowledge will not forsake us, nor will it lose its value in eternity; on the contrary, the objects of faith on earth, will be the objects of fruition in heaven. It will grow and ripen as ages roll on; and then, indeed, shall knowledge vanish away, but only when our present dark and imperfect views shall be clarified and enlarged by the light of heaven. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known." And what limits shall be assigned to the progress of human knowledge in *the light of heaven*—in the *society* of angels and glorified spirits—and in *the course of eternity*?

In these various respects, the knowledge of Christ is transcendently excellent; and I beg to observe, that the union of all these advantages



is unexampled, except in this solitary case. If we examine the various departments of human learning, we shall find that every science has its own peculiar recommendation, but *none* of them except religion, presents all these advantages in a state of combination. And, if the certainty of one science, and the moral influence of another, and the practical uses of a third, be sufficient to recommend them to our patient and serious study—how can we sufficiently estimate the excellency of that knowledge, which is in all respects profitable, both for the life that now is, and “for that which is to come?”

## SERMON XLII.

CHRIST, KING OF ZION.

BY THE REV. JAMES EWING, DUNDEE.

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”—PSALM ii. 6.

(This Sermon was preached at the opening of Free St Andrew's Church, Dundee, on the 2d February 1845.)

CHRIST as Redeemer executes the offices of prophet, priest, and king. These offices are essentially distinct, each has its own peculiar province, but they are necessarily and inseparably connected one with another, and all of them are indispensable to the accomplishment of his work as Mediator. As a prophet, he proclaims the will of God ; as a priest, he makes satisfaction for sin, and pleads the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice ; as a king, he applies the redemption he has purchased, so as to secure the full and eternal blessedness of those for whom it was designed.

Were he not a prophet, the plan of salvation would have remained unknown ; were he not a priest, there would have been no glad tidings to publish to a fallen world ; were he not a king, his instructions would have been without efficacy, and his sacrifice would have proved altogether unavailing to the salvation of those for whom he died. It is his office as a king which gives perfection and efficacy to his offices as a priest and as a prophet, and secures the great ends for which he taught and suffered—for which his blood was shed on Calvary, and carried within the vail. Were he not a king, he would not be a Saviour. There is no character in which he is so frequently presented to us in Scripture as this—no office so often ascribed to him as that of royalty—from which we may learn the importance which the Word of God attaches to this doctrine of Divine revelation.

But while there is no truth of God's Word more clearly and fully revealed, than the truth that Christ is a King, and none which it more concerns men cheerfully and practically to acknowledge, there is none which has encountered more general and determined opposition—none which has more strongly excited the hatred of carnal men, and the jealousy of the powers of this world.

There is a principle of aversion to this truth in the heart of every unregenerate man—a dislike of Christ's spiritual authority—a dis-

position to say, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" and on the part of the powers of this world, there has always been an unwillingness to acknowledge any authority higher than their own—a disposition to regard Christ's kingly claims as an encroachment on their prerogative, and to look with suspicion on all who make divine, and not human law, the ultimate rule of their conduct, and who, when God's commands and man's commands differ, act upon the principle that it is better to obey God than to obey man.

The first part of the Psalm from which our text is taken sets forth the opposition which was to be given to the kingly power of the Messiah. We are here told that "The kings of the earth were to set themselves, and their rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed; saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They were to conspire to overthrow his dominion—to put down all that acknowledged his authority—to refuse to submit to the obligation of his laws, and to strive to free themselves from the restraints of his government. But their counsels, we are told, would be vain, and their efforts ineffectual. The kingdom they were to attempt to overturn was to be established in spite of their most strenuous opposition. Let men do what they will, God's purposes will stand, his designs will find their full accomplishment. Christ's kingdom is founded on the rock of God's immutable decree, and all the powers of earth and hell will never prevail to overthrow it. His throne is upheld by all the attributes of the Godhead. He that sitteth in heaven—Jehovah himself—has said, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

In calling your attention, for a little, to these words, we shall notice,

I. The kingdom which is here said to be given to Christ, or what we are to understand by God's holy hill of Zion

II. The title by which Christ reigns on Zion's hill.

III. The manner in which he exercises his power as king of Zion.

IV. Some of the distinguishing properties of his kingdom.

I. What we are to understand by God's holy hill of Zion.

Zion was one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. There David erected a palace for himself, and there he placed the ark of God, before a place was found for it in the temple built by Solomon. The name came to be appropriated to the temple and its courts. Ps. lxxv. 1, "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." Ps. lxxxiv. 7, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." We find it also applied to the worshippers in the temple, if not to the whole inhabitants of Jerusalem. Ps. xcvi. 8. "Zion heard and was glad, and the daughters of Jerusalem rejoiced because of thy judg-

ments." Ps. cxlvii. 12, "Praise thy God, O Jerusalem, praise thy God O Zion." It is used more frequently than any other name, to signify the Church of God. Sometimes we find it applied to the visible Church, consisting of those who are outwardly, by profession and external privileges, the people of God, as when it is said, Isa. xxxiii. 14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid." Sometimes it is used to designate the Church invisible, composed of real saints—of renewed and sanctified persons—of God's own children. Isa. li. 16, "Say unto Zion thou art my people." Heb. xii. 22, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in Heaven." We also find it applied to the Church in glory. Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads." By the word as used in our text, we are to understand the Church both visible and invisible; the invisible Church consisting of all the elect of God, all who have been given to Christ to be redeemed from wrath, and who shall be finally saved by him and brought to glory; the visible Church, comprising all throughout the world who profess the true religion, who receive Christ's truth, observe his ordinances, and submit to his authority, together with the children of such. The Church, in both these views of it, is included in the Zion of which Christ is king. Our Lord has not only an invisible kingdom, in which he exercises his authority, over which he rules by his Almighty power, by the energy of his grace, and the resistless efficacy of his holy Spirit; but also a visible kingdom, a society of men in the world, though not of the world, joined together for spiritual purposes, constituted under him as its head, recognising his word as its only statute book, acknowledging no authority but his, and owning no other government but that which he has appointed and intrusted to the hands of its own office-bearers. It is by having a visible kingdom, in which his authority is openly acknowledged, in which his right to supreme dominion is asserted, that men have it in their power to manifest their opposition to his royal claims. It is by opposing and oppressing his Church—a Church which, because it has a visible and palpable existence in this world, can be opposed and oppressed by them, that earthly powers display their hostility to the king of Zion; and it is evidently as possessing a visible kingdom, a kingdom with which the kingdoms of this world may come into contact, that we are called to contemplate the Saviour in this Psalm from which our text is taken.

The visible Church is Christ's kingdom as much as the Church invisible. His right to reign in the one is as indisputable as his right to

reign in the other. The visible Church owes its existence to him. He has organized and incorporated it ; purchased and secured for it all its privileges ; he has given to it laws, and appointed office-bearers. It owes all that it has to him, and he alone has a right to reign in it. For any earthly power so to interfere with his Church, as to change its laws or its constitution, infringe upon its liberties, deprive its officers of any of their powers, and its members of any of their privileges, is to usurp the prerogative of the King of Zion, and to attempt to cast him from his throne.

The Church, whether viewed as comprising all the elect, or as composed of those on earth by whom his truth is held, and among whom gospel ordinances are duly administered, is Christ's proper and peculiar kingdom, the hill of Zion on which he has been set as King. This is his proper kingdom, but his power and dominion are not confined to it. He is not only head of the Church, but head over all things to the Church. All power in Heaven and in earth has been given him for Zion's good. The whole earth has been subjected to his dominion, that he may uphold his Church in it, and gather his saints out of it, that he may put down all who oppose him, and overrule all the affairs of men, and all the events of providence, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes towards that Mount Zion which he loves. The angels in Heaven are subject to him, that he may employ them for the great ends for which he reigns—that at his command they may watch over, and defend his chosen—that they may go forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. The powers of darkness are placed under his control. In his cross he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly ; and now he treats them as vanquished enemies, restraining them at his pleasure, and overruling their devices to the advancement of his glory and the good of his Church. He is King of Zion, and as King of Zion he is head over all—exalted above all principality and power, and might, and dominion.

II. Let us inquire into the title by which he holds this kingdom. Our text represents him as reigning by the Father's appointment. His dominion as King of Zion is delegated and official. He is the head of the Church, not as he is God, but as he is God-man and Mediator. "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."

Christ, as God, possesses sovereign authority, and exercises unlimited power over the creatures of his hand. As God, he is creator and governor of all things. Col. i. 16, &c. "By him were all things created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers ; all things were created

by him and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." As the eternal Son, he is with the Father and the Spirit, the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible ; as possessing the Divine nature, all things are necessarily subject to him, all the attributes of the Godhead belong to him, and among the rest absolute sovereignty, unlimited dominion. As God, it is his inalienable right, his inherent prerogative to reign.

It is not, however, the dominion that belongs to him essentially as God, which is here spoken of, but the power with which he is officially invested as Mediator by the act of the Father. The government here spoken of, is a government that has been laid upon his shoulders. The throne which he occupies is a throne on which he has been set. The Father, as representing the Godhead in the economy of redemption, is here described as investing the Son with dominion as Mediator, delegating to him divine power for accomplishing the ends of his Mediatorial work. His dominion in this respect is the Father's gift ; bestowed on him in fulfilment of the conditions of the everlasting covenant, as the recompense of his obedience and sufferings, as his reward for finishing the work which his Father gave him to do. Phil. ii. 9, &c. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." Eph. i. 2, "He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in Heaven, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church which is his body." Acts ii. 16, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Dan. vii. 14, "There was given to him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages, should serve him."

Though Christ's authority as Mediator is given to him, the dominion with which he is entrusted supposes his essential dignity as a divine person ; for we cannot imagine that such dominion would ever have been committed to a mere creature. He on whose shoulders the government is laid, is not only the Child born, but the Son given, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. It is his personal dignity as the only begotten of the Father, which so fully qualifies him for his kingly office as Mediator ; and when, in connection with this, we take into view his near relationship as man to the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, his knowledge, wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and faithfulness, we must see that he is in every respect worthy of the honours to which he has been raised,

and eminently fitted for the high office he has been called to fill as King of Zion.

Though his right to rule in this character is not inherent, but derived, it is a right which none can question. It has been bestowed by him who is the fountain of all authority. His claim to royal honours has been confirmed by purchase and by conquest; but it stands originally in the Father's appointment. He is king by a divine decree. The Lord hath set him as his king upon his holy hill of Zion. He could not have a more valid title to his throne than this—a more unquestionable claim to royal power and honours.

His appointment to his mediatorial throne was formally made when the covenant of grace was entered into in the counsels of eternity. Every thing regarding his work as Redeemer was then agreed upon, and, of course, his appointment as the king and head of his church; and in consequence of this, he began to exercise his kingly office as Mediator immediately after the fall of man. The anointing of the Spirit without measure, which he received when he entered on his public ministry on earth, was a significant intimation of his being set apart to the duties and honours of the kingly office; but it was not till his resurrection and ascension to heaven that his claim to royal dignity was fully recognised. His kingly power, therefore, is sometimes spoken of as being conferred on him then, as a reward for his humiliation and obedience. This representation is not to be understood as intimating that he did not exercise his office as king, before he ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high. We are assured he exercised it from the beginning of time, in virtue of that atonement which he was in the fulness of time to offer for the sins of men. But at his resurrection and ascension, there was a fuller display of his power, a more open manifestation of his dignity and glory. From the time that sin entered to desolate this earth, he put forth his power as a king for the salvation of his people. Even in the depths of his humiliation, when he was a man of sorrows, he gave many indications of his kingly dignity and royal power; but it was at his resurrection and ascension that his glory as King of Zion burst through the cloud of obscurity which had formerly concealed it. Then the crown was put upon his head, and amidst the loud acclaims of the celestial hosts, he ascended the throne that had been prepared for him, and was publicly invested with all the honours of his mediatorial kingdom. When we see the Saviour rising from the dead, ascending to heaven, and sitting down at the right hand of the Father, we cannot doubt his right to reign as king in Zion. He is no usurper. He has the highest claim on our obedience. To refuse submission to him is to resist lawful authority—to reject God's

appointment. This cannot be done with impunity. If Christ be King by God's decree—and if, as King of Zion, he wields the power of omnipotence—it is evident that no enemy can withstand him, that his kingdom will be fully established in the face of all opposition. The truth that he is king may well cause his enemies to tremble, and his people to rejoice. His dominion rests on a foundation which no hostile power can overthrow. All who contend against him, do so to their own destruction. While he reigns, his church is safe in the midst of all the dangers that surround her. The combined assaults of earth and hell cannot destroy her, or even do her any material hurt.

III. Let us now consider for a little what Christ does in the administration of this kingdom to which he has been appointed.

His administration may be viewed, either in reference to the outward organization and arrangements of his Church, or in reference to that spiritual power—that divine resistless energy, by which he effectually accomplishes the great ends for which his kingdom has been set up and is maintained in the world.

With regard to the outward arrangements of his Church, there are two things especially which Christ does as its king and head. He prescribes its laws and institutions, and he appoints its office-bearers. It is evident that if Christ be king in Zion, Zion must be governed by Christ's laws. In every kingdom there must be laws, and laws always flow from the supreme authority in the state. The laws of Christ's kingdom must be of his appointing, whether they relate to articles of faith, to the institution of offices, to modes of worship, or to rules of conduct. No law can be of force within his kingdom but that which has the stamp of his authority. God's word is the statute-book of his kingdom, and no law can be binding on his subjects which is not found recorded there. No human authority can add to, or take from, the laws which are there inscribed. Any attempt to do so is an invasion of Christ's royal prerogative—an interference with his authority as King of Zion.

It also belongs to him as King to appoint officers in his kingdom, to give commission to those who are to execute his laws, and to attend to the ordering of the affairs of his house. It is from the supreme authority in a state, that rulers, and judges, and magistrates hold their commission. The officers of Christ's kingdom must hold their commission from him, or they are not his officers. Whatever they do, they must do in his name, and in accordance with his instructions. They are his servants, and if, in the affairs of his kingdom, they consent to receive commands from any other master, they disclaim his title to their obedi-



ence, and in effect declare that he is not their Lord. The office-bearers of his Church hold their commission from him ; from him they derive all their authority ; and to him they must give account of the manner in which they use the powers with which he has entrusted them.

But the administration of Christ as King of his Church is not confined to outward arrangements. These would be ineffectual for the great ends for which his kingdom has been established, without a divine efficacy—without the power of that Spirit who is sent by Christ, and acts in accordance with Christ's commission. By the Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, he convinces the conscience of sin, enlightens the understanding, renews the will, sanctifies the affections, purifies the heart, makes a willing people to himself, delivers his servants from the dominion of iniquity, enables them to overcome the world, to triumph over all opposition, to be more than conquerors in the end. In the exercise of his kingly power, he restrains the enemies of his people, bruises Satan himself under their feet, overrules all events for their good, gives a successful issue to every conflict in which they are called to engage, and bestows on them at length the conqueror's reward ; clothes them with the white robes of immortality, puts into their hands the palms of victory, sets crowns upon their heads, gives them to sit with him on his own throne, fills their hearts with unending joy, and their lips with unceasing praise.

IV. Let us now attend to some of the peculiar properties of this kingdom.

1st, It is a spiritual kingdom. By this we do not mean that it has no connection with the world, or with the things of the world—that it has no relation whatever to what is earthly or secular. This cannot be while there is a church on earth. To make it a spiritual kingdom, it is enough that the earthly and secular elements connected with it are rendered subservient to spiritual ends, and that the great design and purpose for which it has been erected, is spiritual and heavenly. The kingdom of Christ has been set up for higher and nobler purposes than the kingdoms of this world. The legitimate ends of human government are the establishment of the order and the preservation of the peace of society—the administration of public justice—the advancement of the temporal well-being of men. Human government views man in connection with this world. The kingdom of Christ views him in connection with eternity. It has immediate respect to the value of the soul—to the capacities and desires of an undying spirit. Its ultimate end is the advancement of the glory of God ; its immediate end is the salvation of sinners.

God's glory is the final end of Christ's kingdom, as it is the final end of all God's works. Its grand design is the manifestation of the divine perfections, the display of the character and attributes of Jehovah. It was intended in the economy of redemption to show to an admiring universe the glory of the holiness, justice, truth, wisdom, mercy, and goodness of the Most High—to display the perfect harmony of the divine perfections, even when each was magnified in the highest degree—to exhibit to the view of angels and men, justice and mercy meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other—to manifest the spotless purity of God's character, and at the same time the marvellous riches of his grace and love. In a word, its design was to shew to men and angels what God is, and, in shewing what he is, to show forth his glory.

The more immediate object is to save those on whom God has set his electing love; to bring sinners from darkness to light, from death to life; to deliver men from the slavery of Satan, from the tyranny of evil passions, to purify their hearts, to purge their consciences, to sanctify their lives, to rescue them at length from the power of the grave, and to bring them to eternal blessedness and glory. It deals principally with the hearts and consciences of men. It is indeed highly conducive to their temporal interests, and to their social well-being—but this is its collateral effect, rather than its direct and immediate object.

The means it uses for effecting these ends are also spiritual—the manifestation of the truth, the power of reason, the force of conviction, the Word of God. Its office-bearers are possessed only of spiritual powers—they are warranted to employ only spiritual weapons—they can appeal only to the hearts and consciences of men. The only penalties they can inflict are, suspension from spiritual privileges, and exclusion from the spiritual society over whose interests they have been appointed to watch.

The laws of this kingdom are spiritual. They are not the result of human wisdom, but the dictates of Divine inspiration; they take cognisance, not only of the outward conduct, but of the affections, desires, and feelings of the mind. The subjects of this kingdom are, or profess to be, spiritual—new creatures in Christ Jesus. They serve God from spiritual principles—from a sense of duty, or from the stronger and more endearing ties of gratitude and love. The service which he asks of his subjects, and which they profess to render, is spiritual, not outward homage and lip service, but the devotion of the heart.

2d, This kingdom is destined to be universal. Even now the King of Zion ruleth over all; he exercises all power in heaven and on earth. There are many who do not acknowledge his authority—who refuse to do homage to his sceptre—who usurp his rights, and trample on his

laws. But all adverse power and authority will be overthrown, and enemies vanquished—and nothing left which is not put under him. The stone cut out without hands, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. Every obstacle to the universal establishment of his kingdom shall be removed—his dominion shall extend from sea to sea. “All nations shall be blessed in him, and shall call him blessed. The whole earth shall be full of his glory. The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Every usurper shall be driven from his seat—every opposing power shall be cast down. Those who bow not to the sceptre of his grace shall be crushed beneath the iron rod of his power. All shall be made to confess that he is Lord.

3d, This kingdom shall last for ever. It will stand while sun and moon endure. Christ’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom—his dominion shall not pass away. His throne is established in the heavens, and it shall never be shaken; it is for ever and ever. It will not only continue while the earth exists, it will last through the endless ages of eternity. Even in this world there will be a period of unspeakable grandeur and glory, when light, love, peace, and holiness shall universally prevail—but it is in glory that this kingdom shall be consummated. There all his redeemed shall serve him day and night in his temple. The Lamb slain shall dwell for ever in the midst of them, the object of their praises, the source of all their joys. There his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face. Those shall be ever with him, as King of glory, who on earth have loved and served him as King of Saints.

But will that blessedness be yours? Is the king of Zion your King? Can you say of him as Thomas said, “*My Lord and my God?*” His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and, if you are his subjects, he must reign in your hearts—you must give him the homage of your affections, and make his law the rule of your will and the guide of your conduct. Are you doing this? The King of Zion will not be satisfied with a mere profession of submission to him—he will not be put off with lip-service, with outward expressions of regard—nothing will satisfy him but the submission of the inner man, the throne of your hearts. If you have refused him this hitherto, give it now—touch the golden sceptre of his grace which he is extending to you. By timely submission, you will be raised to royal honours, exalted to sit with him on his throne. Continuing to resist his authority, and to refuse the offers of his grace, you will be trodden as enemies under his feet.

How blessed are the children of Zion ! How much cause have they to be joyful in their King ! What have they to fear ? Almighty power is their protection—infinite goodness the source of their supplies—Divine wisdom their guide—Divine faithfulness their security ! Their King can and will make all things work for their good, and will not fail to accomplish in their experience all the great and precious promises in which he has caused them to hope. In every trial and conflict they may hear his voice saying, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee ;” and in the assurance of his love and faithfulness they may exclaim, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid ?” “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and my dwelling place shall be in God’s house for ever and ever.”

We would, in conclusion, exhort you all to hold fast the great principle that Christ is King, and to give practical proof that you are his subjects, by complying with every expression of his will—by yielding submission in all things to his authority. What more agreeable to reason than that we should obey him who is Lord of all—whose law is the sum of excellence—holy, and just, and good ! What more ennobling than to make the unchangeable will of Christ the great rule of our conduct ! What so honourable as the position of witnessing to the truth that Christ is King—that his authority is supreme—an authority to which the highest on earth should yield subjection ?

This is an honour which has been given to our beloved Church in every period of her history. Her grand testimony has ever been that the Lord Jesus Christ is King in Zion—King and Head of his own Church. In maintaining this great principle, she has had to encounter many a storm of persecution. The blood of many of her best and noblest children has been shed in this sacred cause.

The peculiar testimony of the Church of Scotland we have been honoured to renew in these days in which we live. We have been called again to display the banner inscribed “For the Redeemer’s Crown,” and to contend for his exclusive right to reign in his own house. A hard contested battle has been fought ; and though we have been forced to leave the field on which the conflict commenced, the truth has triumphed. More signally than at any former period of her history, our Church has vindicated the principle, that Christ is king in Zion, and by the practical demonstration she has given of this great doctrine, has turned towards her the eyes of all the Churches of the world—has excited the admiration, and engaged the sympathy, of those in every land who hold and love the truth of God. It is God who has given us grace to be faithful, and unto him be all the glory. But surely

it furnishes cause of humble gratitude and holy joy that we have been honoured to take part in such a conflict—to make exertions or sacrifices in such a glorious cause. And has he, to whose kingly claims we have been privileged to bear testimony, been wanting to us in the day of trial? Has he not shown that he is indeed king of Zion, by the abundant goodness which he has made to pass before us, since, for his sake, we were constrained to leave the sanctuaries in which we formerly worshipped? How graciously has he dealt with us! We may well say, “What hath the Lord wrought?” How wonderfully has he turned the counsels of our enemies to our advantage, and opened the hearts and the hands of our friends! He has enabled us to devise and to execute liberal things. From what he has done, we may form some anticipation of what he will do for us and by us, if we prove faithful in his service.

Holding fast by him, we have nothing to fear. We may have a greater fight of affliction to pass through than we have yet experienced. The signs of the times give intimation of a severer conflict than we have yet seen between the powers of light and darkness—between the faithful subjects of the king of Zion, and those who practically, if not avowedly, deny his right to reign. But there can be no doubt as to the issue. Christ’s cause must triumph in the end. The ark of the Church, under the protection of her glorious head, will ride securely on the surface of the swelling waters; and when these have subsided, the subjects of the king of Zion will peacefully inherit a regenerated earth.

Let it be your prayer continually that our beloved Church may have grace given her to prove faithful to her Lord and King, and may be eminently honoured by him as an instrument in hastening on the day when all opposition to his royal prerogative shall cease, when the powers of this world shall consider it their privilege to serve him, and when the kingdoms of men will become the kingdom of God’s Son.

And may this goodly sanctuary which you have raised to his praise—this monument which you have erected to his Kingly power—be ever blessed with his presence! So long as it stands, may His truth be faithfully proclaimed within its walls; and may the time never come when one shall occupy the place which I now occupy, who will fail to witness, both with his lips and by his life, that CHRIST ALONE IS KING. Amen.

## SERMON XLIII.

THE INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

BY THE REV. WM. NIXON, MONTROSE.

" And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—*Rev* xxii. 17.

IN considering this verse, various important truths press upon our attention—such as, the nature of the blessings here offered under the figure of "the water of life;" the suitableness of these blessings to our condition, and what is meant by our coming and taking them; the solemn and the encouraging circumstances in which the invitation is given; the persons to whom the invitation is sent; and the parties from whom it comes.

I. Consider the nature of the blessings here offered—their suitableness to your wants, and how you are to come and take them. "The water of life" may either mean the influences of the Holy Spirit on the soul, or the blessings of the gospel generally. Cast out of the favourable presence of God, you are here invited to draw nigh to him, and be accepted in the beloved. Exposed to his anger, you are invited to experience its removal, and, in its place, the manifestations of his favour. Exposed to innumerable providential calamities in this world, you are here invited to come to the Redeemer, to ward off these calamities from you, or to sanctify them for your benefit, and finally deliver you out of them all. Deserving of, and exposed to, all the torments of hell, you are invited to partake of all the glories of heaven. Naturally the fallen offspring of fallen man, you are here invited to receive life from Jesus as your living and life-giving head. Prone to seek your happiness in the world which continually and bitterly disappoints you, you are here invited to the Redeemer, that he may truly bless you, by graciously filling you with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and animating you with the hope of eternal life.

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As long as you are destitute of the blessedness here offered, all the happiness that you *do*, or *can* have, is not worthy of the name of happiness; whereas, if you come to Jesus, you will find in him a fulness of all good for your benefit, that you may receive ever-increasing measures of wisdom, and holiness, and joy, out of his fulness. In this world you meet with little else than disorder and misery; in fellowship with Jesus, and with his people, through the medium of his ordinances, you will experience a peace that passeth understanding. Earthly things are all deceitful; spiritual realities answer the highest possible wishes and expectations of the soul. The world is a spiritual wilderness, full of obstacles and of enemies to your progress heavenward. Jesus here offers to refresh and strengthen you by his grace, for all the toils and the conflicts of your spiritual course. The men that have their portion in this life, are continually contending with each other for their respective shares of earthly good. In the salvation of the gospel, there is enough for all who can apply, and after all, an infinite fulness of good still untouched; and your very participation of saving grace will fill you with the benevolent wish of bringing all others whom you can influence, to apply to the same ever full, yet ever flowing fountain. The highest happiness of an earthly kind which you can think of, is mixed and embittered by much evil. The gospel of Jesus produces in those who receive it, unmingled satisfaction. Your sins are hidden from the sight of God under the covering of Christ's atoning blood. Your depraved and wretched hearts are renewed, and inhabited, and cheered, by the presence and indwelling in you of his Holy Spirit. The otherwise melancholy path of life, and the otherwise dreary region and shadow of death, and the vast and otherwise unknown futurity that lies beyond the boundaries of sense and time, are all enlightened by Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness; and, under the cheering and enlivening beams of his diffused grace, you may pass in safety and comfort, and even in triumph, onward through life, and through death itself, into the regions of glory, and honour, and immortality.

Then, too, these exceedingly great and manifold blessings are all purchased for you, by the precious blood of God's own Son, and offered to you freely. You have nothing to give for them. You are not required to offer any thing as an equivalent; nay, you are forbidden to attempt securing them by any personal merit. It is as persons who not only do not deserve any good, but who deserve all evil at the hand of God, that you are to come to him, through Jesus, as poor, destitute, undeserving, ill-deserving creatures, for a salvation that is alike complete in itself, and freely bestowed. All that you have to do, is to come and take them.

If you approach unto God in the public and private ordinances of his grace, and stir up all that is within you to call upon his holy and gracious name ; and if your whole soul goes out in dependence on Jesus, for pardon, and peace, and hope, and spiritual life, and strength, all these, and all other spiritual blessings, will infallibly become yours.

Such is a short outline of what Scripture and experience teach respecting the nature of the blessings here offered to you ; their suitability to your wants, and the way in which you are to come and take them. In the hope that, by the blessing of God, some of you have been led earnestly to desire, truly to thirst, for these blessings, I would now proceed to enforce the invitation to you, to come and take them, by setting forth, as shortly as possible, the circumstances in which the invitation is given, the persons to whom it is addressed, and the persons from whom it comes.

II. Consider the circumstances in which the invitation is given. These circumstances are learned from the context. Some of them are very *awing*, others of them are very *encouraging*.

In the previous part of this Revelation to John, we have set before us a most remarkable prophetic figurative history of the Christian Church, in all ages, till the end of the world. Towards the conclusion of the book the scene, painted in faithful and striking colours by the Divine hand, thickens in interest. The two contending hosts of good and wicked beings, who have been at war through all past ages, come at length to their greatest and most decisive struggle. The followers of the Lamb are triumphant. Their enemies are shut up for a thousand years in hell. Halleluiahs are sounded forth from Heaven, and re-echoed by the earth, because "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," producing everywhere upon the earth," "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." At length, and just before the end of the world, the scene of moral brightness that the earth presented, gives way to one of temporary darkness. The powers and agencies of evil are again let loose, and come forth raging over the earth. Many are seduced to evil, and fall away to the camp of the enemy. Once more the opposing hosts gather together to battle ; and while the enemies of God and of his people are hastening forward, as they think, to conquest, they are suddenly arrested by the judgments of God, and finally crushed under his avenging hand. Then all nature suddenly prepares for the great judgment. The millions of the dead come forth from their graves. The great white throne is erected in the sight of an astonished universe. The Saviour descends to sit upon it, and gathers all nations before him. The lake, burning with fire and brimstone, is discovered in readiness to



receive the wicked. The Heavenly Jerusalem, with its walls of jasper, reposing on foundations of precious stones, with its gates of pearl and streets of pure and shining gold, with its river of living water, and tree bearing immortal fruit, and the blessed inhabitants walking in the midst of the uncreated glory, with which it is filled—this glorious city is also made to burst upon our view; and then the solemn announcement is given, that the wicked and the righteous are finally separated, and that their character and destiny are unchangeably fixed; for “He that is unjust, must be unjust still; and he that is holy, must be holy still.” Rev. xxii. 11.

Now, we shall individually have a personal interest in the most solemn of these events, and pass through the ordeal of these events to our everlasting state; and if we would have a blissful, not a terrific, interest in these realities, we must now come and take of the water of life freely. It is in the view of these events, and in the midst of the description given of them in the context, that the invitation of the text is addressed to all; and, no doubt, the intention of this junction is to overawe our minds into a willing, earnest reception of offered mercy by the prospect of coming judgment. Let us, then, look forward to the awful season that is fast approaching to us all; and, as our fitness or unfitness for that season depends on our reception or rejection of the Saviour now, let us feel impelled to him with an intense and agonising earnestness of heart for all the blessings which he offers so freely to bestow.

But the circumstances in which this invitation is here addressed to us, are encouraging as well as overawing. It is great mercy in God to us, in the midst of such solemn declarations of his purposes and ways, and in the very act of concluding all the revelations which he is ever to give of his will to man—and while he is setting forth the manner in which he is about to manifest his own glory, and wind up the whole plan of his providence toward the earth, it is great mercy in God, at the same time, to think of the frailties and the fears of his guilty creatures, and to introduce so gracious and attractive an invitation as that of the text. Had the Book of God ended without any such sweet and soothing offer, many a humble believer might have taken alarm, and cast away his confidence and hope, and concluded that in that eventful season the Lord would forget to be gracious to him, and be favourable no more; but when we behold the great God, while revealing the glory of his wonderful doings, casting a look of pity and of love upon the consciously unworthy, yet contrite children of men, and reviving them with the light of his gracious countenance; and when we hear the Eternal, from amidst the most awful revelations of his terrible and overpowering judgments,

sending such a message of tenderness as this, can we be otherwise than melted into love, and covered with the tears of gladness in his blessed presence? Can we do otherwise than come at his request to the Redeemer for the blessings of his grace? Can we do otherwise than come and take of the water of life freely?

Here, it may be observed, that probably some of you will needlessly discourage yourselves from coming to Jesus for the blessings of his grace, of which you are in want, and that others of you will conclude that you are disposed and prepared to partake of these blessings, while neither in a state of mind to welcome the offer of salvation, nor having that offer made to you. In the hope of its serving to guide and strengthen the perplexed and the tempted, and to arrest and humble the thoughtless and the forward, I would now point out

III. The persons to whom the invitation is addressed. They are the *thirsty* and the *willing*. "Let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

Any one who feels his need of these blessings, or who feels his need of happiness, without as yet seeing distinctly where it is to be found, is here specially exhorted and encouraged to come to Jesus for salvation. "Let him that is athirst come." Let the man who cannot find any peace, any rest, any satisfaction in created objects and earthly enjoyments, who after all his keen pursuit of happiness, is still disappointed, and unsettled, and full of tossings to and fro, let him only make trial of the privileges and blessings, the employments and the prospects of a follower of Jesus; let him only believe in the gospel and obey it, and he will find himself arrived at a source of life and true felicity, of which he had hitherto no conception, a full, and overflowing, and boundless, and eternal fountain of all real good.

Especially let any one who not only says with others, Who will show me any good? but knows and feels that the good which he does need, is the light of the divine countenance lifted upon him, and therefore thirsts for God, for the living God, that he may come and appear before God, let every such individual consider himself peculiarly called upon to come to Jesus as his prophet, priest, and king, and Jesus will enlighten his mind, and renew his heart, and wash away his sins in the all-atoning blood, and cover him with the garment of the all-perfect righteousness, and subdue, control, deliver, and defend, and finally, and entirely, and forever, redeem him from all evil.

But, say some doubting troubled hearers of this gracious invitation, we fear that *we* are *not* athirst—that we are not *so* sick of the world, and *so* desirous of these spiritual blessings, as is necessary in order to

our being made welcome to the benefits of the Redeemer's purchase and grace. To meet the feelings even of such, consider what is said in the text: "*Whosoever will, let him come.*"

If any of you doubt whether you have the anxious desire, the earnest longing, for salvation implied in thirsting for God, yet if you have *any* willingness at all—if you are conscious of any disposition existing within you really to come to the Saviour—even to *you* is the word of this salvation sent: "*Whosoever will, let him come.*" Your heart may be like a barren wilderness, but Jesus can turn it into a fruitful field. It may be like the dry and parched earth, but he can make it like a well-watered garden. He can put his Spirit within you, as a fountain of living waters, springing up within you in all spiritual knowledge, and excellence, and joy, and springing up into everlasting life. Even in this world, there is a river flowing through the City of God, to make it glad. The influences of the Holy Ghost, proceeding forth from Jesus, fill his ordinances, and you are to come and drink of the living stream, —you are to come and refresh yourselves at the wells of salvation,—you are to come and find peace in the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon you, and light, and life, and strength from the communications of his Spirit, and everlasting consolation, and good hope, from the promise of his grace. You are to come and take such views of his holy and gracious character and will, of the security, and peace, and union of his people, and of the realities of the future unfading blessedness reserved in heaven, as shall animate you to be devoted to his service, and to cleave to the company of his followers, and to walk with him by faith on earth, that you may at length see him as he is, and be for ever transformed into his likeness by the blessed sight.

It might be expected that the first sound of this invitation would make the heart of all who hear it leap for joy; and that poor perishing sinners would be seen, on the first announcement of such grace in store for them, flocking in crowds to the blessed Redeemer, and receiving him through the medium of all his ordinances, and cleaving to him by a continual faith. But instead of this, the many hear the invitation with indifference, and neglect it; or question the truth or value of it, and reject it with positive aversion; or insincerely profess to esteem, and merely pretend to accept the offer. Even the few who are brought to see so far its reality and its worth, do still keep halting between the idea of embracing it, and the idea of putting it away from them. They come with a strange reluctance to improve it; and they are ever apt to think lightly of it again, and seldom or never feel all the activity and the joy which it is fitted to inspire.

Hence it is necessary not only to make the offer of salvation,—the simple offer of which should immediately fill every one with an earnest

desire to accept it,—but also to accompany the offer with the urgent repetitions of it, and these from all those persons whose solicitations are fitted to prevail with sinners.

IV. Therefore, consider, in the last place, the persons by whom the invitation is here given. “The Spirit and the bride say come,” &c. &c.

Although God the Father is not expressly and formally introduced in this passage as endeavouring to allure you to the Saviour, yet certainly the revelation which he has made of himself, as full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy, and the melting calls which he gives you to turn from your backslidings and iniquities, and to come to him and live, are intended and fitted to persuade you to take refuge in his favour and loving-kindness, as the life of your souls.

Further, you are here invited to Jesus by the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit says, come.”

The Holy Spirit has filled the Scriptures with innumerable inducements and invitations to you to come to the ordinances of grace for salvation. The Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit; for “holy men spake” what the Bible contains, only as they were “moved by the Holy Ghost.” Now, there are in the Scriptures endless calls to you to take of the water of life freely. The Bible is full of all imaginable reasons for your immediately receiving, by faith, a free and full salvation; and every one of these inducements is just the voice of the Holy Spirit inviting you to come to Jesus. In every sentence of the sacred writings, and by every form of language that is calculated to influence your consciences and hearts, the Holy Spirit is urging you to forsake your wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts, and to return unto the Lord for mercy and abundant pardon.

The Holy Spirit has also filled the character of Jesus with innumerable attractions to allure you to him. Remember, that whatever is attractive in the person and work of the man Christ Jesus, is owing to the Holy Spirit being given to him without measure. On one occasion, mentioned in Luke iv. 18, &c., we find Jesus, in the midst of an assembly of the inhabitants of Nazareth, quoting that prophecy respecting himself, which runs thus, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” And having forthwith applied the passage to himself, and exhibited himself as the heavenly teacher and almighty Redeemer predicted in these words, they “all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which pro-

ceeded out of his mouth." Now, what I want you to notice is, that the grace which He then manifested is expressly ascribed by himself to the Holy Spirit resting upon him. To understand, then, how the Spirit invites you to come to Jesus, you should remember, that whatever is attractive to you in the person of Christ, in his incarnation, in the graciousness of his character, in his miracles and doctrines, or in his life and death, was owing to the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. And as the Holy Spirit has filled the person and the life, and the redeeming work of Jesus, with innumerable reasons to persuade you to come to him for redemption, in this way also are you to listen to the Holy Spirit as inviting you to come.

Further still, the Holy Spirit fills the very material creation around you with continual proofs and enforcements of the necessity and desirableness of your obtaining an interest in the salvation of the gospel, inasmuch as every view, that creation, which is the work of the Spirit, presents of material beauty, reminds you of the far greater loveliness of moral and spiritual beauty; and inasmuch as every instance that occurs of calamity and of death, reminds you of your need of an interest in that world where no calamity ever enters.

And then, too, the Spirit invites you by all that he has done in believers and for them, since the beginning of the world. The graces which they have manifested, the joys that they have experienced, the very intercessions for you which they have offered at the throne of grace, are all the result of the Spirit's work in them; and therefore, whatever motives to receive the truth are furnished by these considerations, are just so many invitations of the Spirit sent to you through the medium of the saints, to come and partake of those blessings which have so enriched them.

But again, the Spirit hath given you that natural conscience within you, which often points out to you your sin, your danger, and your duty. And every time the voice of conscience is heard within you warning, admonishing, reproving, or encouraging you, you hear, in fact, the voice of the Spirit himself, declaring what is *his* mind in reference to your character, and conduct, and prospects.

Farther still, the Spirit works directly upon your consciences and hearts. He awakens and strengthens within you the sense of what is right and wrong, good and evil. He strives with you, to bring you to repentance and reformation. He instructs you in the way of duty and of peace. He reproves you of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When you are convinced that you are sinners by nature and by practice, and therefore odious in the sight of God—when, especially, you feel the hatefulness of unbelief in rejecting the offered Saviour—when you are

impressed with the truth and the rectitude of his character, and claims, and with your need of an interest in his finished work—when you see that no sin, and no sinner, while he continues in sin, shall find favour with Jesus, and that he will take vengeance on all who know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son—when such convictions and feelings as these fill your minds, and subdue you to their power, this is the work of the Spirit within you; and his gracious design in the whole of it is to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered to you in the gospel.

The bride, or Church of Christ, also invites you to come. This invitation is addressed to you alike by the Church on earth, and by the Church in heaven.

The Church *on earth* invites you. The Church is unceasing in her prayers that sinners may be converted, and that saints may be edified. Her members make their light to shine before men, so that others, seeing their good works, may be led to glorify their Father in heaven. Her ministers are set apart and supported to labour for your salvation. The ordinances of the Church are maintained, as the means of leading you to Jesus, and to the knowledge of the things belonging to your peace. And thus the Church, by her prayers, and by the holy example of her members, by the labours of her ministers, and the maintenance of her ordinances, invites you to come and take of the water of life freely. Especially does the Church invite you by her privileges. “Her Maker is her husband, and her Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” Isa. liv. 5. “She greatly rejoices in the Lord, and is joyful in her God; for he clothes her with the garments of salvation—he covers her with the robe of righteousness, even as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” Isa. lxi. 10. And as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so the Lord rejoices in his Church. Now, when you consider the interesting and blessed relation in which the Church stands to Jehovah, and the manifold enriching favours which he showers upon her, and when you consider that you are called upon to enter into this very relation, and to share in these favours, should any thing be considered awanting to induce you to cast in your lot and take your portion with the Church? Well may you incline your ear and give up all your sinful ways and connections, and long to dedicate yourselves to the Lord, and to serve him in the beauties of holiness, and love to yield a prompt obedience to the call which the people of God address to you, saying, “Come with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning us.”

This invitation is also given to you by the Church *in heaven*. Even the angels there do earnestly desire the salvation of men. They pry

into the scheme of redemption. They raise their adorations to Jehovah, for filling the earth with his glory. They come forth as ministering spirits to minister to them that are heirs of salvation, and they never cease their services to the meanest saint, until they have conducted him safely beyond the regions of temptation and sin and death, into the immediate presence of God. Plainly, it is love to God and to his creatures that prompts these heavenly beings to take such a lively, active, effectual interest in the salvation of men. And if such concern for us animates angels, we may safely conclude that the redeemed from the earth, who are animated by the same love, and who are moreover connected with us by the peculiar ties of nature and grace, do not fail to take a similar interest in our spiritual welfare. Indeed, they are expressly set before us (in Rev. vi. 9, &c., and xi. 16, &c.) as earnestly praying for, and then adoring the execution of God's purposes both of judgment and of mercy toward this earth. And no doubt the reason of their conduct is, that they long for the promotion of the Redeemer's glory in the salvation of his people. And so, over every repenting sinner, there is joy felt in the presence of the holy angels—by the spirits of the just made perfect. And were the vail now rent which separates heaven, the holiest of all, from this world, the outer court of the great temple of the universe, and were you admitted to converse with the glorified saints, and to listen to their expression of their feelings toward you, oh! with what earnestness, with what heavenly arguments, with what accents of seraphic love, would they unfold before you the degradation and ruin inseparable from sin, and the unspeakable blessedness and glory awaiting every one who embraces the offered grace and mercy of the gospel! How eagerly would they urge you to Jesus, who has saved them, and can save you to the uttermost—who has raised them, and can raise you from the pit of ruin to the heights of glory everlasting! How would they, by all the miseries they have escaped, and all the blessedness to which they have attained or expect, and by all that is due to their glorious Lord, invite, entreat, and even in mercy, if possible, compel you now to come to Jesus for his grace, that, to the honour of his power and love, you too may escape all this misery and attain all this blessedness!

You cannot, indeed, literally hear all this from the departed saints, but you need not be the less certain, that could you now have intercourse with them, such would be the language in which they would address you. And at all events, you should contemplate their character and condition in their glorious dwelling-place on high, and contrast it with the mournful state, and the still more mournful prospects of sinners, until you feel yourselves most urgently impelled to the same

Redeemer, who has done such wonderful things for all of his people whom he hath already brought to glory. Look upward, then, to the happy regions of the sky, and behold the circumstances of all who have departed from this earth, to the presence of the Saviour there. Their manifold iniquities are for ever pardoned by God, and blotted out from the book of his remembrance. The last vestiges of corruption have disappeared from their natures; and throughout all their moral character and conduct, not one spot of defilement can be detected, even by the all-seeing eye of God. No tempter, and no temptation, and no enemy whatsoever, ever disturbs for a moment, the order, and harmony, and blessedness of their spirits. No feeling, and no dread of want, or privation, or sickness, or pain, or suffering of any kind, is, or can be experienced by them. Weakness and trouble, ~~sin~~ and death, have no existence, are not known nor thought of, in that happy world; for God dwells and lives in all things, and all things dwell and live in God. There, the redeemed are now admitted to most beatific visions of God's glory, of the absolute perfection of his nature, and the wisdom, righteousness, and grace of all his dealings. There, they behold the glorified Redeemer reflecting from his person, with a softened, yet surpassing brightness, all the attributes and glory of the Godhead. And there the Spirit of holy love, continually flowing out from the God of love, fills, and animates, and binds together in inseparable union, the whole family of saints and angels. Are you not ready to exclaim, that it would indeed be good for us to be there? Do you not feel the contemplation of the happiness, the unmingled, exalted, and everlasting happiness of the redeemed on high, exciting in you a longing desire to share in the same final and complete redemption? Is it not your heartfelt wish, breathed forth now into the ear of the Lord of Hosts, that you may come out of all your tribulations, and wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and so be before the throne, serving God day and night in his temple, where he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among you, and where you shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat, for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you into living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes? If you would attain all this blessedness at length, you must now come to Jesus and receive his grace, and take of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Not only is the Church of Christ, both in heaven and on earth, as one body, inviting you to come, but every single member of the church ought individually to urge this duty upon you. Nay, every one who merely hears the gospel, may be heard, or at least *should* be heard, re-echoing the invitation, "Let him that heareth say, come."



To "hear" often means in Scripture to believe in and obey; as in these passages, "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me,"—"This is my beloved Son, hear him,"—"He that is of God heareth God's words."

Therefore in the clause, "Let him that heareth say come," we may understand it pointed out as the duty of each believer to bring to the Saviour all whom he can influence by his prayers and example and instructions. The believer should say to all around him, "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Psalm xxxiv. 8. The believer can tell you from his own experience that he never knew what it was to possess and enjoy real good, until he was reconciled to God, and filled with love to his service. He can tell you from his own experience that you <sup>persons</sup> ~~can~~ <sup>never</sup> have any peace, any spiritual life or strength, until you ~~come~~ <sup>go</sup> to Jesus and receive his grace. He can tell you from his own experience that you will find an efficacy in the fountain of his blood to cleanse you from all sin; that you will find in Jesus a fulness of all good; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and grace; and that, if you come to him, your souls shall be cleansed and refreshed by the communications of his Spirit. From his own experience, the believer can farther tell you, that all things are freely given to you of God. And surely, if the Christian can tell you all this, supposing even that he should attempt throwing obstacles in the way of your coming to the Redeemer, and were for sending you back to the world, you would be ready to say to him, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." When you consider what the true Christian can say to you of his privileges, and blessedness, and prospects, and especially of his hope of eternal life, as forming the anchor of his soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the vail, you should, as it were, take hold of his skirt, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard and perceived that God is with you. You should come speedily to pray before Jehovah of Hosts, and seek him with all your heart. (Zech. viii.)

Even the man who has merely heard the gospel, but never believed it for his own salvation, is bound to point out the pillar of fire for your direction, although it should prove the pillar of darkness and confusion to himself. There is not upon the earth an impenitent sinner, however prosperous and seemingly gay and happy, but if you could wring from him a genuine account of himself, and compel him to tell honestly the truth, would tell you such a story of his own remorse and alarm for sin, and of his bitter experience of the insufficiency to his soul of all earthly good, and so acknowledge the presence of all conceivable reasons for

embracing the truth, and the absence of all just objections and obstacles to the reception of it; that his confessions would themselves furnish the most urgent motives to you to approach, what he himself is forsaking, the fountain of living waters.

And still further, every one who now hears the glad tidings of mercy should, in obedience to the exhortation, "let him that heareth say, come," address himself, or be considered by you as addressing himself, to all around him, in some such language as the following. "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be broken. Let us come and weep for our sins before the Lord, and with steadfast hearts seek him as the Lord Almighty, and our strength. Let us ask of him the way <sup>his announ</sup> with our faces thitherward. Let us ascend the mountain of his ordina<sup>n</sup>ces, and urge our way into the secret of his presence, to be divinely taught his ways, and guided in the path of his commandments."

I have thus endeavoured to set before you God the Father of all, the holy and ever blessed Spirit, the Church on earth and in heaven, every member of the Church individually, and even hearers of the gospel, as urging on you, in one way or another, the duty and the privilege of a present believing application to Jesus for the blessings of his grace.

But I have yet to mention, what I have left unmentioned till now, that the Lord Jesus himself invites you. It is Jesus that says in the conclusion of the verse, "whosoever will, let him come."

To give at present anything like a full account of the manner in which the Saviour invites you, is impossible. Every view which the Scriptures give of his wonderful person and character, and of the divine and human excellencies that meet in him,—every word he uttered, every work which he performed, or is still performing, — furnish endlessly numerous and most persuasive motives for coming to him at his call.

I shall, however, just mention a few of the considerations that should render the invitation of the Saviour effectual in drawing you to himself, to obtain a personal interest in his great salvation.

The adorable and blessed Redeemer has always been giving such manifestations of his grace to sinners of the human race, ~~as~~ are fitted to subdue the most untractable to his love and service.

Even before mankind were brought into existence at all, Jesus, in the prospect of what he was appointed to accomplish for them, rejoiced in, the habitable parts of the earth, and had his delights with the sons of men. He came to our first parents in Paradise, and while they were covered with the confusion, and filled and agitated by the fears of conscious guilt and expected punishment, he addressed them not only in the

language of just indignation, but also in words of divine compassion, and held forth before them the prospect of pardon and salvation.

Throughout the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, the Son of God continually revealed himself in various ways as the only Saviour, and called on self-destroyed sinners to come and find their help in him, and, while yet prisoners of hope, to turn to him as their stronghold, assuring them, that in looking to him they would be saved, and that in turning to him, he would pour out his Spirit upon them.

When at length the Son of God took our nature, and appeared a man upon the earth, instead of surrounding himself, as he might have surrounded himself, with such tokens of greatness, and power, and righteous vengeance, as would have driven sinners away from him, he came in the most winning and simple character imaginable. True indeed, angels made the heavens to resound with the praises of his birth, and wise men came from far to do him homage ; but still, his earthly origin, and his first appearance in the world, were any thing but calculated to frighten sinners from his presence. In fact, the circumstances of his birth and infancy, as of his whole life, were, speaking in the language of this world, so mean and even repulsive, that haughty carnal men are still apt to turn away from Jesus with contempt, because they have not eyes to see the glory which he veiled beneath his outward meanness.

When he had lived till his thirtieth year in humble retirement, and then stood forth and avowed himself the Saviour of the world,

“ No weapons in his hand were seen,  
Nor voice of terror heard.”

The first persons who attached themselves to him were a few illiterate fishermen of Galilee, and so far from disdaining their society and friendship, he received them graciously, taught them with unwearied patience, put up with all their ignorance, and prejudices, and stupidity, and perverseness, and after he had opened their understandings to know, and inclined their hearts to love the truth, left them behind him on the earth as his Apostles, and by their instrumentality established Christianity in the world.

The condescension and love which he thus manifested to these humble individuals, were exemplified in his whole deportment toward others. With what kindness and candour he explained to Nicodemus, and enforced upon him the only way of participating in the blessings of grace here and of glory hereafter !—with what gracious words he addressed the depraved inhabitants of Nazareth, and for a while held even them in amazement and in rapture !—with what unparalleled self-denying benevolence did he go forth among the most distressing scenes of human wretchedness,

and heal all manner of sickness and of disease among the people ! What affecting proofs he continually gave that he was the friend of sinners, that he had come to call them to repentance and to life, and to seek and save the lost ; to prove the all skilful and Almighty Physician both of their bodies and their souls ! Even while he upbraided the cities, wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not, and proclaimed the woe coming upon them, and vindicated the Divine sovereignty in dooming them to destruction, instead of abandoning entirely and giving up to ruin indiscriminately all, *all* the inhabitants of those places where the great majority rejected him, he still lingered around the accursed cities, to pluck as brands from the burning any single souls in whom his announcements might awaken the slightest feelings of repentance. And even while he uttered his solemn reproofs and threatened the most awful judgments against the hardened multitude, he was at the very same time, and almost with the same breath, heard uttering these melting words, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Mat. xi. 28, 29, 30. The truth is, many waters could not quench His love to men. He saw them perishing in their sins ; and notwithstanding all their pride and unbelief, and hardness of heart, and presumption he still pressed himself upon them as the bread of life to their famishing souls, and continued to assure them, that “ He would in no wise cast out any that came to him.” John vi. 37. He embraced with eagerness every opportunity that occurred for renewing the offers of his grace to men, and for endeavouring to excite within them desires of spiritual blessings, that he might rejoice in satisfying these desires. As for instance, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when great numbers of Jews were assembled in Jerusalem, Jesus openly in the temple, and during successive days, avowed himself the Messiah, and vindicated his character and claims against all their objections ; and although the Jews were so offended, so enraged at him, that they sought to cut him off by violence, he made no other return for their enmity than to warn them faithfully and compassionately of their sin and danger, and press upon them still the offers of his grace. For, taking advantage of a ceremony practised on the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when “ the priests surrounded the altar with their palm branches, and poured out water in the temple,” as an expression of the general desire of the predicted Messiah’s appearance, and the pouring forth of the Spirit by him, Jesus, standing probably on an eminence, to be the better seen and heard, proclaimed with a loud voice, saying, (see John vii. 37) “ If any man thirst,”—if any man

ardently desire true happiness, and long for the blessings promised under the administration of the Messiah,—“let him come unto me,”—by faith, “and drink” his fill; for I am most ready freely to communicate every needful blessing, and particularly those supplies of the Spirit which you profess so earnestly to desire. For “he that” truly “believeth in me, as the Scripture hath” in many places “said” and promised, shall receive those supplies in so great an abundance, that he shall not only be refreshed himself, but from within him “shall flow” vital streams, and, as it were, “rivers of living water” for the refreshment and comfort of others. This he peculiarly “spake of the Spirit, which they who believed in him should receive,” and be the means of communicating to others.”\*

But it were endless to particularise to the extent possible, the gracious efforts of the Saviour, when on earth, to draw sinners to himself. Not only in such a mild yet powerful sermon as that delivered on the Mount, but in all his public teaching, his doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. It came with noiseless yet effectual power upon its humble and candid hearers, insinuating itself into their hearts and affections, and proving pleasant and profitable like rain to the thirsty earth. The manner, as well as the matter of his teaching, was to the last degree tender and alluring. He did not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. The bruised reed he did not break, the smoking flax he never quenched; and even when he laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought and in vain, when sinners refused to be gathered to him for redemption, and he had to leave them to perish, he wept over them the tears of God-like sorrow, because of the ruin which they were thus bringing on themselves.

As Jesus approached the end of his life on earth, his love to men seemed to grow stronger and stronger, and to shine brighter and brighter amidst all the worthless, and wicked, and malignant, and murderous treatment which he suffered at their hands. While he knew that the Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem were combining to put him to a cruel and shameful death as the vilest of malefactors; and while he also knew that the disciples who had hitherto clung to him were about to forsake, deny, or betray him; and while he saw the terrible, and to us incomprehensible, agonies and sufferings through which he was about to pass under the avenging wrath of God,—in these circumstances, he collected his disciples around him, and loaded them with the pledges of his deathless love, and tried to direct and support and soothe them in a discourse full of unparalleled grace and consolation; and then, for them and for all who should afterwards believe in him, he poured forth an intercessory

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\* Doddridge on John vii.

prayer, breathing throughout a love entirely divine. And when he surrendered himself to the agonies of the garden and of the cross, his great desire was, that by being lifted up upon the cross, and afterwards and in consequence exalted to Heaven, he might draw all men unto him. And still to the last moment he offered himself to sinners as their Saviour, and by praying so earnestly, even on the cross, for their forgiveness, and crying with a loud voice, "it is finished," and then yielding up his spirit, he thus spent his latest breath in inviting sinners to him for salvation.

I have mentioned all these things to fill you with suitable views and feelings respecting the invitation which the Saviour here addresses to you, saying, "Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And has not enough been said to render his invitation effectual? Shall it be, that Jesus must yet complain of you, that you will not come to him for life? Can you doubt his claims on your complying with his offer? Can you question your need of the blessings which he presents? Can you disbelieve his power to confer them?

Perhaps some of you are ready to say, that although Jesus so invited sinners before he came into the world, and while he lived upon the earth, yet now that he has departed from the earth where he suffered and died, and is exalted to glory and honour in his Father's kingdom, he has forgotten, amid the raptures of his present exaltation, to think of and to notice you, and to invite you any more.

If you speak thus, you heed not what you say. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is therefore as willing now as ever, "to feed his flock like a shepherd, and to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." He is as willing now as ever to restore your souls, and to lead you in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake—to fill you with spiritual nourishment and strength while you live, and to bring you to dwell in His house for ever. You should remember, that the invitation in the text was given by Jesus after his ascension to heaven, and from amidst the glories that surround him there. This shows that he has now the same compassion for sinners on the earth, that he manifested when dwelling in the midst of them. Hence the language of the Apostle, (Heb. iv. 14), "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

I entreat you, then, to consider how Jesus here invites you, and that it is from heaven that this invitation comes. Do not go about to resist the invitation because of the imagined distance between him and you, or because of any conviction of unworthiness. He is never far from any one of you, and he comes to save the chief of sinners. "Behold," says he (and this language he uttered after his ascension), "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. iii. 20.) You are therefore invited to come to him, whatever has been your character during the past, if at present you have any heart, any desire, any, even the faintest, but real wish to be saved. If, indeed, you have no desire, you are not invited,—you cannot expect to be invited. It would be putting contempt on the gospel to invite you. But, if you have the least genuine wish for salvation, Jesus now offers it to you from heaven, and you are expected to partake of it. You may have been long an enemy to God and to godliness—a despiser of Christ, a neglecter of the great salvation, a grievous backslider from the ways of piety, righteousness, and purity; but the feast provided is for the halt, and the maimed, and the blind, and we are to compel such to come in that the house may be filled." (Luke xiv. 10.) Jesus is able and willing to save you now, henceforth, and for ever, even to the uttermost. If you be ignorant, he will teach you—if weak, he will strengthen you, if wavering, he will confirm you—if corrupt, he will sanctify you—if alarmed, he will give you peace—if tempted, harassed, and persecuted, he will succour you—if beset with temporal difficulties, or bowed down by affliction, he will deliver you out of all your troubles—if agitated by the prospect of death or eternity, he will enable you to smile even at death, and to triumph in the hope of eternal life.

And now, my brethren, you may perceive how this invitation to come and take of the water of life freely is pressed upon you from every quarter to which you can turn.

Your Father in heaven, the Almighty One, the God of love, most graciously invites you. The Eternal Spirit, the author of every spiritual desire and holy thought in the soul, is now interceding with you, and I trust making intercession *in* you, to bring you to the Saviour. The Church on earth and in heaven, and even the holy angels, earnestly invite you. Every member of the Church, and every hearer of the gospel, in one way or another invites you. The sound of this invitation, proceeding forth from the throne of God, is heard throughout all the courts of heaven, and is reverberated from this lower world. No place but hell is silent on this subject. Nay, hell itself, though unwillingly and in a distressing manner, does yet emphatically press

upon you the importance of now accepting this invitation. The very groans of the damned do solemnly urge you to the Saviour now, that you may not go into the same place of torment at last—that you may never come nearer to the bottomless pit of ruin, than at most to take a glimpse of it from your safe and happy dwelling, far distant in the regions of the blessed. And, then also, Jesus, the Living One, the possessor and the giver of all life, who was dead, having given his body to be broken, and poured out his soul in agony upon the cross, as a sacrifice for sin, and who is now alive for evermore, having the keys of the grave, and of the invisible and eternal worlds—this blessed Redeemer, looking down from amidst the glories of heaven with an eye of compassion, and calling upon you with a voice of most affecting entreaty, invites you to come and refresh yourselves at the fountain of his grace,—invites you to come and take the water of life freely.

I can bring forward nothing more. There are, as you may perceive, reasons weighty and powerful, motives both solemn and affecting, inducements and encouragements quite overwhelming, to urge you to the Saviour. If the spectacle of the whole universe calling upon you with one voice, and labouring, if I may so speak, to hem you in to the reception of Christ Jesus and of his grace, does not avail, there is no remedy. If you can stand out in thoughtless indifference, or in unconquerable hardness, or in sullen contempt, or in groundless fear, or in sinful unbelief, against the overtures of reconciliation and mercy, and the offers of grace that are thus pressed upon you, by God himself, by his blessed Son, and by his blessed Spirit, and by his whole family in heaven and on earth, I know not what farther to do or say. If your heart is yet hard as the adamant, may God himself, with his own hand, smite the rock within you, and force out of it the waters of repentance. If you are still ready to cleave for happiness to this world, which, when supremely loved, is the death of an immortal soul, may God himself awaken, alarm, and undeceive you, and make you alive to your condition before it be too late, and so cause you to leave these broken and empty cisterns of earthly pursuits and enjoyments, and come to the fountain of living waters. If your souls be yet like the dry bones in the valley of vision, may the wind of the Spirit come and breathe upon you, and make you live! If you are still like a barren and scorched field, over which the heavens are as brass, on which God has hitherto forbidden the clouds to rain, may he now, for his own name's sake, even *show* down his grace upon you!—may he visit you with a time of refreshing!—may he rend the heavens and come down, and pour out his Spirit upon you, until there is no room to receive it! If you are still set



against him, may this be the day of his power, in which he will make you willing to serve him in the beauties of holiness!

To you who are willing, I once more repeat the invitation to come. The gates of righteousness and grace are open, that you may enter through them to bless the Lord. All the blessings of pardon, and acceptance, and adoption, and holiness, and peace, and eternal life, are fully and freely offered to you through the Saviour, and by Him, and in Him, and you are required merely to accept them, that they may be yours.

And as there is nothing in the universe to keep you from God in Christ, and every thing in the universe is urging you to him, I trust there are not a few, whose hearts are moving towards the Lord, and saying, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. We give thee back, O Lord! thine own property, ourselves; Thou hast the best right to us. Thee alone we acknowledge as our proprietor, that thou mayest put us to an honourable use—make us vessels of mercy, and not leave us vessels of wrath. We take thee for our heavenly teacher; for, though blinded in understanding, and easily deceived and led astray when we trust to our own judgments, waiting on thee in meditation on thy word, and in prayer, thou wilt guide us in a sure and safe path, illuminate us inwardly with a divine light that shall penetrate through our whole heart, and carry us sweetly captive to thy will. We place ourselves under thy gracious government, that thou mayest write thy law upon our hearts, and regulate all our conduct, giving us the blessed disposition of making thy will our will, and thine honour our end in all things. We choose thee as our portion, as the overflowing, satisfying fountain of all enjoyment, desiring henceforth to taste no stream of happiness which has not its spring in thee."

## SERMON XLIV.

CHRIST THE PROPITIATION FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

BY THE REV. W. R. TAYLOR, THURSO.

“ And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—1 JOHN ii. 2.

HERE are glad tidings of great joy—glad tidings to sinners. To sinners of every character and name—to sinners of every nation and clime—to sinners throughout Asia’s ancient kingdoms—to sinners among Europe’s civilized inhabitants—to sinners among Africa’s oppressed and degraded families—to sinners throughout America’s extensive plains, and throughout the numerous islands of the sea—to sinners from east to west, and from pole to pole, of this habitable globe—to each and all, there are here most blessed and most joyful tidings,—good news from heaven, and from the God of heaven—the God whom all have offended by their sins. The Son of God, Jesus Christ the righteous, is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Oh ! is not this gospel glad news for all people, for all nations—for sinners of all nations—for sinners of any nation, of any district, of any locality, of any congregated multitude, of any company great or small—yea, for any sinner whatever,—he “ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world ? ” Is not that glad tidings to sinners here present—to each and any sinner here present ; —to you, O sinner, and to me, he “ is the propitiation for the sins of the world ? ” “ Behold,” said the angel to the Shepherds, “ I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people ; for unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.” So would we say to you, “ Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.” The Saviour, who was born in the stable of Bethlehem, and crucified on the hill of Calvary, “ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” “ O sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise unto the ends of the earth. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, ye mountains ; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and hath had mercy on his afflicted.”

But attend to this blessed message.

I. It is a message for *sinners*. It is for sinners that there is comfort

here—it is for sinners that there is here a message of peace. And oh, is not that wonderful,—wonderful when we think of the holiness of God,—wonderful when we think of his infinite abhorrence of sin? Is it not wonderful that he should send any message of glad tidings to sinners? Yes, it is very wonderful!—wonderful in itself, and wonderful in the eyes of the sinner, who sees his sins as committed against God! “Adam, where art thou?” said the gracious as well as holy God. “I heard thy voice in the garden,” replied the trembling, conscious criminal, “and was afraid.” “I was afraid.” Nothing but judgment was expected. How wonderful, then, the revelation of mercy which followed! Oh! sinner, have you come here this day burdened with a sense of guilt—filled with dark thoughts of God—filled with despairing thoughts as to yourself—filled with fearful forebodings as to the future? Have you come with the feelings of guilty Adam, when he was afraid, and hid himself from the presence of the Lord? Have you come, feeling that you could not look up to God—that you could not cherish confidence towards him—that between you and him sin had produced feelings of estrangement and alienation? Oh then, may it not be wonderful in your eyes, that to you, a sinner, such a message as this should be sent—that to you, a sinner, the just and holy God, whose face you had seen covered with a frown, should so freely, so graciously, so unexpectedly reveal himself as a God of peace, reconciling you to himself, not imputing to you your trespasses? It is a message to sinners.

II. It is a message to sinners respecting a *propitiation* for sins—a message to sinners respecting *the* propitiation for sins. He is *the propitiation* for sins.

By a propitiation, is here meant a propitiatory sacrifice—a sacrifice of atonement—a sacrifice by which God is propitiated, and on the ground of which, he shews himself propitious or favourable to *sinners*.

He is the propitiation, the propitiatory sacrifice for sins. He is the substance of what the sacrifices under the law were typically and ceremonially. He is really and effectually a sacrifice of appeasement—a sacrifice of a sweet savour unto the Lord—a sacrifice which hath truly propitiated the holy God, and on the ground of which he can and does shew himself propitious, without a frown on his countenance, yea, with a countenance full of delight, even to *sinners*.

The Son of God appeared in our nature, and obeyed and suffered as a public person. He obeyed and suffered as the propitiation for sins. In infinite love the Father gave him, and he gave himself to be the propitiation for sins; and sin having been laid on him—sins having been laid on him—the sins of all who were regarded as in him—the sins of

all whom he was regarded as representing—he fully bore them, and took them away—so that now in him God is not only reconcilable but reconciled, not only a God of love, but a God of peace. He is a God of peace in Christ, and to sinners in Christ; and hence Christ is spoken of in Scripture not merely as the propitiatory sacrifice, by the shedding of whose blood atonement was made; but as the propitiatory or mercy-seat, whence Jehovah manifests himself as reconciled.

We said that by propitiation here, we are to understand a propitiatory sacrifice; but while it means that, we are farther to consider it as holding out the *continued* propitiatory *virtue* of the sacrifice. It is not said, he *was*, but, he *is* a propitiation. Christ, having offered the sacrifice, having as the priest and the sacrifice offered up himself, and thus reconciled God, went with the blood of the sacrifice into the true holy of holies, even into Heaven itself, there to present the virtue of his sacrifice—the merit of his blood, in the place of Jehovah's manifested presence. He went to the throne of Heaven with his own blood, and thus made the throne of Heaven the throne of God's propitiatory or mercy-seat; yea he is himself God's propitiatory or mercy-seat on that throne. He is God's propitiatory resting-place, where he delights to dwell, and delights in being propitious, where his language is, "Fury is not in me." "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

III. But for *whose* sins is Christ the propitiation? "He is," says the Apostle, "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." When he says, "for our sins," he may mean, either for the sins of us—Jewish believers, or for the sins of us—believers whether Jews or Gentiles. If he means the former, then the meaning of the second clause is, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of believers of all nations. He is the propitiation for the sins of us Jewish believers, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of believers throughout the whole world. In this view, the language would agree with that of Caiaphas, which he spoke not of himself, but, being High Priest that year, by Divine inspiration, when he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

But it may be said, that there is no evidence that the Apostle John in his Epistle addressed Jewish believers merely. It may be said, that he addressed believers generally, and this may be true; and so his meaning here will be,—He is the propitiation for *our* sins, who have already taken him as such; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of any and

all, who *will* take him, throughout the whole world. This is the view which we would be disposed to adopt; and in this view the words correspond with those of our Lord in his intercessory prayer,—“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”

1. He is the propitiation for *our sins*, for our sins who believe in him. This expresses the fact in regard to believers, and also the exercise of their faith in Christ.

It expresses the fact. He is the propitiation for their sins. He gave himself for their sins. He bore their sins in his own body on the tree. On the cross he *virtually* took away their sins; and they being in him, by faith, their sins have actually been taken away. They have come to God through him; and so he is actually their peace, and God is actually reconciled to them in him. According to their faith, so it is to them.

It also expresses the exercise of their faith. “He is the propitiation for our sins.” Faith sees and appropriates him as such. It sees him as the propitiation for sins, and it sees him as God’s free gift to sinners; and thus seeing him, it appropriates him, saying, “He is the propitiation for my sins—he is the propitiation for our sins—he was wounded for our transgressions—he was bruised for our iniquities.” He is our surety, our sin-offering, our righteousness, our Redeemer, or, still more particularly, my surety, my sin-offering, my righteousness, my Redeemer.

O, are you acquainted with the sweetness of this appropriation—with this most sweet and reviving, and strengthening, and soul-satisfying, and soul-gladdening exercise—feeding on a crucified Saviour—eating his flesh, and drinking his blood? Are you learning that new song, which no man can learn but the redeemed from among men? Are you learning to call Christ by this glorious name, the Lord my righteousness, the propitiation for my sins?

2. But while he is the propitiation for our sins, he is also the propitiation for *the sins of the whole world*. Now this includes the following important truths,

1st, He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, that is—at least it includes this—he is the only propitiation for sins. There is no other propitiation for the sins of any, throughout the whole world. Without shedding of blood is no remission—no remission of the sins of any; and no blood, but that which has been brought into the heaven of heavens, and has rendered the throne of God a throne of peace, can avail for that remission. In Christ only is God reconciled. In Christ only can he be just in exercising that mercy in which he delights. Oh, if it were otherwise, would he not have spared his own Son? Behold, then *the Lamb of God, the sacrifice of God*. The only sacrifice by which the

justice of God is appeased, the only sacrifice which can give peace to a conscience truly enlightened. He is the only propitiation for the sins of any throughout the whole world. There is no salvation in any other, and no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

2d, He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—that is, we observe farther, he is *sufficient* to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. There is infinite sufficiency in his atonement; and whatever sinner, and however many sinners, of the whole world, may come and make use of him, they shall find his atonement amply sufficient for the removal of all their sins. We grant that only the sins of the saved were borne by Christ. We cannot agree with those who say that he suffered merely for sin in general. So far as we can see, the righteous God could not visit a holy being merely for sin in general. To us it appears, that the sins of particular individuals must be charged against him, ere justice could strike the blow. The sins of those who were to escape through his substitution must be charged against him, else there could not appear to be justice in inflicting one pang. How could the Holy One and the Just suffer under a government of infinite righteousness, without actually taking the place of the guilty, and suffering, so that they should not suffer, having suffering as his, that suffering might not be theirs?

Still we maintain that his atonement is sufficient for the sins of the whole world. The whole penalty of the law was endured; and while each sinner needs all that, the whole world would need no more. Under the law, the priest was to lay on the victim all the transgressions of the children of Israel in all their sins, and the result was, that, typically, the whole was taken away. It would have made no difference, had the number of Israelites, and of their transgressions, been less or more. The treatment of the victim would have been the same in either case. So the sins of all his people were laid on Christ, and the virtue of his sufferings swallowed up the whole; and had they been many more, it would have done the same.

I do not say, O believer, that your sins added to the number or duration of Christ's sorrows—that there was an additional pang or tear for you; but, I say, the whole was for you. Every pang was for you—every sorrow was for you. His whole suffering and obedience was for you. At the same time, it is sufficient—his infinitely meritorious obedience unto death is sufficient as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. O sinner! it is a sufficient atonement for you. Its sufficiency is like that of the ocean, which covers completely whatever is cast into it; and if you by faith bring your sins to it, it will swallow them all up—they shall sink like lead in the mighty waters. Or, to express the matter differently,

God is fully reconciled *in Christ*, his justice is fully satisfied in him: and if you embrace Christ—if you identify yourself with Christ—if you come to God through Christ, you will find the just and holy God, whom you approach, fully reconciled to you.

3d, He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—that is, we observe farther, he is in *offer* such. He is so offered to sinners of the whole world, that any sinner of the whole world may come and trust in him as the propitiation for his sins; and, trusting in him, shall find him to be so. Any sinner of the whole world may come—is invited to come, and put his hands on the head of this great sacrifice, confessing his sins over him, and casting them upon him, and doing so, shall find them taken away. Any sinner of the whole world may make what use, and all the use of him he needs,—may come—is warranted, is invited to come—and eat that which is good, and delight his soul in fatness. This is a feast for all people. Christ our passover, sacrificed for us, is a feast for all people; and whosoever will, may come and partake—whosoever will, of the whole world, may come and share with us in that on which we are feeding. He is the propitiation for our sins. We are feeding on him; and whosoever will of the whole world, may come and join with us in so making use of him, in so eating him by faith, and in calling him by faith the propitiation for our sins.

The same blessed truth is explicitly taught us in these words of the Apostle to the Corinthians, “God is *in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.*” God in Christ *is reconciled*; has been propitiated: has delight in being propitious; and will be found to be propitious, by all who come to him through Christ; and by publishing this, and commanding it to be published to the whole world, he is reconciling the world unto himself—he is exhibiting and offering Christ to the world as his propitiation for sins, and so reconciling the world unto himself.

We do not say that his giving such invitations—his thus reconciling the world to himself—imports his being *reconciled to the world*. What it imports is, his being reconciled *in Christ*, and his desiring the reconciliation of the world—his desiring that the world be led *to Christ*, in whom he is reconciled—in whom, and by whom, his justice has been satisfied.

4th, He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—that is, we observe in the last place, as he is actually the propitiation for the sins of us who believe in him, so he shall be actually the propitiation for the sins of all throughout the whole world who shall obtain like precious faith with us. He is now in offer the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and he shall be actually the propitiation for the sins of all throughout the whole world who shall embrace him as such, even as

he is now actually the propitiation for our sins, who have thus embraced him.

Now, from this subject we may see that there is a sense in which it may be said that Christ died for the world, as there is a sense in which it is true that he died only for his people. He died for his people only in this sense—that only *their* sins were so atoned for, as that they shall not suffer for these sins themselves; but he died for the world, inasmuch as his death is an expression of God's love to the world—is a propitiation or atonement provided for the sins of the world, and is the ground on which God is reconciling the world unto himself. He died for the world, inasmuch as sinners of the world in common are invited to come and be of his body, whose sins he actually bore. There is a similar distinction in reference to Christ's whole character as a Saviour. He is both the Saviour of the Church and the Saviour of the world—actually the Saviour of the Church—in offer the Saviour of the world. These relations he now bears, and these relations he bore on the cross.

But let me guard you, my friends, against considering the doctrines of Scripture, and this most precious doctrine which we have been considering, in a merely speculative manner. It matters not what views we hold, if they do not influence our practice—if they do not influence our hearts. If any one asks, then, “In what sense am I to believe that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world?” we answer, in this sense, that you, as a sinner of the world, are warranted for yourself to take him, and rest on him as the propitiation for your sins, and that you, as a believer, if you are a believer, are bound to see that you do what in you lies for having the gospel published to every creature—every sinner, throughout the whole world.

I say, as a sinner, you are called so to believe this declaration, as to see your warrant to take and rest on Christ as the propitiation for your sins. Oh, sinner! your sins are infinitely evil and loathsome, and they justly expose you to the fire of infinite vengeance. But God has no pleasure in your death. He has no delight in the misery of any. He has a desire for the happiness of all. He has a desire for your salvation; yea, so infinitely strong was this desire, that he gave his own Son to die for you, and to be the propitiation for your sins; and now, having received a full atonement, he is in Christ reconciling you to himself. Oh! will this have no effect on you? May not this give you peace? May not this stay your enmity, and bring you back to God? Oh yes! if you believed it with the heart, it not only might, but would; for Christ crucified is the ministration of the Spirit—the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Oh then! believe with the heart the love of God in Christ—the love of the infinitely holy God; and seeing



him, as in Christ, not only a God of love, but a God of peace, come to him and believe in him, even in this just and holy God, as in Christ reconciled to you. Thus, through Christ, as the propitiation for your sins, draw near by the Spirit unto the Father.

And let believers continue to do so. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Seek the Spirit for this end. Oh! pray much for the Spirit. Take heed of grieving the Spirit. Cultivate holiness of heart and life. Cultivate that love which is the sum of the law, and the end of the gospel, and which itself will have a reflex influence in making the gospel—the pure gospel of love—more glorious in your eyes and more precious to your heart.

And do what in you lies for the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Every truth of God's word bears on practice; and the person who believes most truly the *universality* of the *provision* for the salvation of sinners made by the atonement of Christ, is the person who prays, and labours, and sacrifices most for making that atonement known among all nations. That is the person who most truly believes the doctrine of our text, and who has imbibed most of the spirit of the gospel—the spirit of love to God and man. To contend for the universality here referred to, or for any other universality, in reference to the atonement, while we are not doing what in us lies for the universal *publication* of the atonement, shows what need we have to remember that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

Oh! surely the Church is verily guilty—we are all verily guilty—in this matter. We have freely received, but we have not freely given. We have forgotten the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—words which, in this connection, are synonymous with those of the Apostle, "Now abideth faith, hope, love—these three; but the greatest of these is love." Oh! let us seek more of the spirit of Christ. While we seek to be the humble, grateful, delighted *recipients* of the Divine mercy, let us labour after the still higher blessedness, to which it is the design of this mercy to bring us, of being animated by the very spirit of him who hath had mercy on us; and, seeing the message of the gospel is, that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*—not of Scotland merely, but of the whole world—let us strive much in prayer, and use whatever other means the Lord enables us to employ, for the spreading abroad among the nations of the knowledge of this blessed propitiation, and of its unchanging, exhaustless efficacy, animated in doing so, and seeking that others be animated, by the spirit which dictated the angels' song—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

## SERMON XLV.

THE HAPPINESS OF BELIEVERS SECURED IN CHRIST.

BY THE REV. JOHN SWANSON, SMALL ISLES.

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."—JOHN xiv. 1-3.

OUR LORD having informed his disciples that he was about to leave them, knew well that their minds must be distressed by this intelligence. It may be that he observed signs of sorrow, uncertainty, and dismay, gathering upon their countenances; and that, therefore, filled with grief as his own heart was, he hastened to speak comfort to theirs.

"Let not your heart," said he, "be troubled,"—agitated (as the word signifies) like water, when subjected to any disturbing force. They ought not to be dismayed, as if their stay were gone—as if they had lost their confidence in their Lord. They believed in God. They believed that he spake to the fathers by the prophets, that he is faithful to his covenant with Abraham, to be a God unto him and to his seed, and in his seed to bless all the families of the earth. They believed that God would fulfil his promise; and this belief of theirs our Lord acknowledged, when he said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," or, "and ye believe in me." They knew that God, by an audible voice from Heaven, declared Jesus to be his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased, and that this Son was visibly anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism. They saw our Lord, on many occasions, manifesting the holiness, and mercy, and power of the Divine character; and they ought not to doubt his being the seed of Abraham, the promised Messiah, the very Son of God.

Jesus was indeed, as to his human nature, now about to leave the disciples for a time; but he was only, as heir of all things, withdrawing to his Father's house; and he comforted his followers by the assurance, that that withdrawal would be ultimately to their advantage. "In my Father's house," said he, "are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He would not deceive them; he would not permit them to forsake all and to follow him, if he did not know that by doing so, whatever they lost and what-

ever they suffered in this world, they secured their happiness in the world to come.

In Heaven are many mansions—abiding, everlasting habitations, for men as well as for angels—and it was to prepare a place there for his people, for many people, that Christ, in all the circumstances of his departure, was now about to leave his disciples.

Still, however, there was sadness to the disciples in the thought of Christ's departure; and therefore he cheers them in these words, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." They were not to think that the separation would be eternal—that it would be long; but this should encourage them in all their troubles, and afflictions, and persecutions, that their Lord having prepared for them a place in his Father's house, would come again and introduce them into that house, that there they might abide with him for ever.

The doctrine which, by the blessing of God, we intend to illustrate, is, that the happiness of believers is secured to them in Christ.

I. This happiness is secured in the unity of purpose, and design, and substance of the three persons of the Godhead, and therefore in Christ.

To believe in God is to believe in Christ. Infidels condemn the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in one Divine Essence; and simple ones attempt to scan it. But to us, it is pure matter of faith, which no just reasoning will impugn, and which no sound intellect will pretend to comprehend. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God;" and through the very same faith we know that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. The Deity himself, who alone comprehends his own nature, has revealed to us this truth; and he has so revealed it, that it lies at the very foundation of the superstructure of Christianity, and that with it the hope and comfort of the Christian must stand or fall.

Our Lord requires his disciples to believe that he is in the Father, and that the Father is in him, and that he and the Father are one; and it is upon God manifest in the flesh that the believer stays his soul, while he regards a god separate from Christ as at best a vain fiction, upon whose altar may be inscribed, "emptiness and confusion." Yes! the image of the invisible God, the brightness of his glory, the equal of God, and therefore very God, was revealed to man, and made partaker of his flesh. He who is one with the Father pitied us—suffered for us—died for us. He atoned for our sins, though it was against himself we sinned.

What a glorious display of the Divine character is here, at once

transcendently proving that God will vindicate his injured honour, and yet that he is "love!" "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God purchased his Church "with his own blood." And it is this love which woos the soul to God, which cheers and animates the Christian, and which, by the Spirit, purifies his heart, refines his feelings, elevates his affections, expands his mind, and constrains him to say, "We love him, because he first loved us." The believer feels that God is love, because Christ is God.

How glorious, too, is the economy of redemption! God sent God to redeem men—God atoned to God for the sins of men; and it is God who applies the atonement of God to the souls of men. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; the Son died for men; and the Holy Ghost receives of the things that are the Son's, and shews them unto his people. The blessed Trinity, with unity of purpose, and unity of love, concur in the unity of the Godhead, for the salvation of the sinner. How emphatically, then, may it be said, that, in the scheme of redemption, "God is all in all!"

Thus in Christ, as a Divine person, the happiness of his people is fully and eternally secured.

II. It was to secure the happiness of his people, that Christ, through death, withdrew to his Father's house.

In the decree of God, the kingdom was prepared for them before the foundation of the world (Matt. xxv. 34); but, in connection with that decree, it was necessary that the Redeemer of the children of the kingdom should suffer and die. There were obstacles in the way of their entrance into heaven, which Christ alone could remove. Their guilt and the wrath of God must be taken away; and these obstacles our Lord did remove, though at the expense of labour and suffering to himself, the extent of which we cannot conceive. It was because the Son of God engaged in this work, that he was oppressed and afflicted by all the sufferings which the malice of men, instigated by the powers of darkness, could heap upon him. It was because he had determined to lead guilty men to heaven, that his labour was agony, and his sweat as great drops of blood falling upon the ground. It was while labouring in this work, as none other did or could labour, that, in the bitterness of his spirit, he exclaimed, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end. There was no difficulty, no suffering, no labour, which he did not willingly endure till he opened up for sinners an entrance into his Father's house. And it

was as their forerunner that he himself entered in by his own blood, and that he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

This hope, then, is as an anchor to the believing soul, that because Christ liveth, his people shall live too—that because he has entered into his Father's house, they shall enter too—and this anchor taking hold of ground that cannot yield, and fixing itself more and more firmly as the strain increases, preserves the soul from making shipwreck of the faith, let the storms which assail it be what they may.

In the world, the disciples had indeed tribulation. They were hated, persecuted, scourged, imprisoned, and stoned. But this would at last only make their rest tenfold more pleasant.

How sweet will it be to the people of God, when they have gone home, to look back upon all that they suffered while pilgrims and strangers on this earth. The very memory of their sighs and their groans will then be pleasant to them; and how cordially will they bless God for the good way in which he led them—most good even when most painful. Truly it is worth while to arrive at heaven's gate with full eyes, that we may know the blessedness which results from God's wiping away our tears. It is worth while, even through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God.

There remaineth a rest for the people of God—there are mansions prepared for them, though not in this world. The followers of Christ are sojourners on earth, pitching their tent now here, now there, with much, perhaps, to distress them, and with little from without to comfort them. They are pursuing their journey often, it may be, with streaming eyes and a heavy heart, sighing, as they wish for that rest which the world will not and cannot afford them, and which they can find only in their Father's house, where their rest remaineth.

What think you of the New Jerusalem—the City of God prepared for his people? We are told that its streets are pure gold, that its walls are built of precious stones, and that its gates are pearls;—that the glory of God and of the Lamb is the light of it, so that there is no night there;—that in it is no curse, no sorrow, no sin;—that the river of the water of life and the tree of life are there, and that the inhabitants walk in the light of the glory of their Redeemer. It is true, that this is partly figurative language, but it is manifestly language by which the Spirit of Inspiration intends to convey to our minds ideas of all that is great and glorious. And eternal rest, an eternal mansion in this great and glorious city, is that which Christ prepares for his people, when, for a time, he withdraws from his disciples.

III. Christ himself will introduce his people into that happiness

which he has prepared for them. "I will come again," said he, "and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Our Lord did indeed shew himself to the Apostles after his resurrection from the dead ; but this was not the coming again spoken of in our text ; for again, as to his bodily presence, he withdrew himself from them. Angels, however, told them, immediately after they had seen him ascend up into heaven, that in like manner he would come again ; and this future coming is that with which he comforted his disciples, when he said "that he would come and receive them unto himself."

Of this "coming of the Lord" the Apostle speaks (1 Thess. iv. 16-18), when he says, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

The bodies of the disciples were reduced to dust ; but their Lord has not lost his interest in that dust. He remembers it—he knows it. Yes ! though it should have been scattered to the four winds of heaven, he will come, and at his coming grant to his people a glorious resurrection. He who is "truth" has promised to do that, and, in addition to his word, his own resurrection is a proof that he will do it.

It is childish, it is mere trifling, to talk of difficulties in the way of a resurrection, since it is the power of God that is to accomplish it. He who cannot lie has told us that he will raise the dead, and shall we doubt his truth because we cannot comprehend the infinitude of his wisdom and power ?

How far the bodies of the saints will differ from what they now are, we know not. All we know is, that they will be raised incorruptible, spiritual, powerful, glorious—altogether like the glorious body of our Lord. And with this fact, Christ, and the Apostle, after his example, comforted the hearts of believers.

"The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised," and O ! with what ecstasy will the people of God hear that sound ! With what joy will they spring from the dust, fully prepared to meet their Lord, at this his promised coming, all deformity, and weakness, and corruption, being left in the grave !

What a cloud of glory will then ascend from this our once miserable earth to the highest heavens—a cloud of redeemed men—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands—a multitude that no man can number, with everlasting glory on their heads ! O ! what a hymn of praise will burst from their lips and from their hearts to him

who washed them from their sins in his own blood, when death is swallowed up in victory, and the whole Church, triumphant in her all-glorious King, shall with him enter into her heavenly mansions, to be for ever with the Lord!

Having now considered the happiness of believers, as secured in Christ—in his person, his work, and his promise—we shall endeavour, in concluding, to make some remarks on the present comfort which flows from this subject.

1. There is comfort, then, for guilty sinners, who truly seek pardon, in the fact that God hath purchased his Church with his own blood.

No mere creature—not even the highest angel—could die in our room and stead. His life is not his own, but God's; and therefore he cannot lay it down for another. But when He, who is a divine person, took upon him the form of a servant, he had perfect right to dispose of his services of obedience and suffering as he would—he could lay down his life for us, for his life was his own.

Since God, then, though not according to the Divine nature, died upon the cross, is there not efficacy in his blood to cleanse the guiltiest soul? Did he not prove, when he made his own soul an offering for sin, that he has no pleasure at all in the death of the sinner? And is it in mockery that he says, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?”

Come, then, O heavy laden sinner, and find comfort at the cross of Christ!

Truly there is comfort there—peace with God—a peace which passeth understanding. Peter was troubled when Christ told the disciples that he was about to leave them. How much more was he troubled, after he had denied his Lord. But O! how great was his peace, the comfort which he experienced, when his troubled conscience was pacified by his Lord's blood; and how well did he understand the import of his own expression, “the precious blood of Christ!”

2. It is quite unnecessary to dwell on the facts, that Christ has prepared a place in his Father's house for all who believe in him, as well as for those who enjoyed his bodily presence on earth. But the anxious soul will be desirous to know that he has prepared a place for it.

Have you then come as a guilty and condemned sinner to God manifest in the flesh, that you might be justified freely by his blood? Are you conscious that without Christ you must perish; and are you willing to be saved by his death and intercession, esteeming all your own righteousness but as filthy rags?

Do you in spirit follow Christ, as did the disciples of old, through good report and bad report, accounting yourself a pilgrim and stranger

upon earth—abstaining from the course of this world—setting your affections on things above—taking up your cross, and forsaking all for his name's sake?

We ask not, do you follow this or that section of the Christian Church; but do you follow Christ himself? Is his honour dear to you, and would you account separation from him and from his cause as the greatest of troubles? If you can satisfactorily answer these questions, then may you believe that in Christ's Father's house there is a place for you. Yes! Canaanite and dog as you may esteem yourself, unworthy to eat at the children's table, the Lord of the house will himself set you down at his own table, and with him shall you eat meat in the kingdom of God.

3. But when our Lord left the disciples, did he limit the comfort which he gave them to the bare hope of a far distant resurrection? No; He and the Father, who are one with the Spirit, did send the Spirit, even this Divine Comforter, to abide with them for ever; and the Spirit so given was the seal and earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Eph. i. 14.)

Through the abiding, then, of this Comforter with them, they had inward peace in the midst of outward trouble; they had not only the promise, but also a foretaste of the heavenly inheritance. And it was through the presence of this Comforter that they were enabled to rejoice, because "they were counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name of Jesus, and that Paul and Silas could, at the very moment when they were suffering from stripes, and bonds, and imprisonment, sing praises unto God.

Were they not, however, to be destitute of all sensible enjoyment during the long interval between their death and their resurrection? No! They had the spiritual presence of Christ on earth, even after his body was removed from them; but this presence, though it was to them a source of much joy, they accounted as an absence from him compared with what they would enjoy immediately after death. "Whilst we are at home in the body, (said the Apostle), we are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 6.) And this was what cheered Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, while he was being stoned to death—that the Son of Man, whom he then saw standing at the right hand of God, would receive his spirit.

The comforter whom Christ sent to his disciples, he sends to his people still. It was this Spirit who taught them that they were children of wrath; and who, having taught them this, led them for pardon and peace to the crucified Lord of glory—who wrought in them precious faith in the precious blood of Christ. And having done that, he abides with them to comfort them, as he abode with the disciples.



Poor forlorn wanderers, deluded visionaries, may the world account them, but they are not "orphans," and they know in whom they have believed. The Spirit of Christ's Father, and so of their Father, is in them; and, through faith in him who died on Calvary, they can from that mount look down upon the turmoil of this earth, without a sigh for its pleasures or its honours; and they can pity those who centre their happiness in the pomp, and pride, and glory of this vain world.

They must themselves in this world expect tribulation—they must, as of the Church, be afflicted with her, when she is "tossed with tempests, and not comforted"—they must groan while in the body of death—they must feel when assailed by Satan's fiery darts—they cannot but suffer, if maligned and persecuted; but still they have a peace which neither Satan nor the world can rob them of. And O! how great will be their peace when they enter into the rest which remaineth, and from which all fear and oppression shall be far away!

## SERMON XLVI.

THE NECESSITY OF TESTIFYING REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, TO THE FAITHFUL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

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“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Acts* xx. 21.

EPHESUS was the metropolis of Ionia, and one of the most celebrated cities in Asia Minor. In its vicinity was the temple of Diana, famed throughout the world for magnificence and splendour, but particularly for its containing an image of that goddess said to have fallen down from heaven. The number of worshippers who were continually resorting thither was consequently great; for (to use the words of Demetrius) all Asia and the world worshipped her. To a Christian Apostle, then, Ephesus must have been a place deeply interesting, as its influence in the cause of superstition was powerful and extensive.

Paul, therefore, who had received a special commission from heaven to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, could not regard the place without considerable solicitude. Accordingly, as we are informed, he visited it repeatedly in his official character. His preaching in it, as might naturally be imagined, met with keen and determined opposition. But he was successful notwithstanding; for, by means of it, “the word of God grew mightily, and prevailed.” This gratifying result of his labours induced him to continue them longer than perhaps he otherwise would have done. But his growing success roused his enemies to adopt measures of violence, particularly a silversmith named Demetrius, who made shrines for Diana’s worship. Either feeling or apprehending the failure of his trade in shrine-making, he, with his craftsmen, excited a tumult in the city against the Apostle. The Apostle’s personal safety being thus in jeopardy, he found it necessary for him to withdraw from this scene of duty.

He then directed his course to Troas, and from thence to Macedonia, where he continued for some time preaching the gospel. On his voyage homeward to Jerusalem, he touched at Miletus, a sea-port town in the vicinity of Ephesus. The circumstances to which I have alluded made

it inexpedient for him to go thither in person; and therefore, as he was anxious to know the state of the Church which he had planted there, and perhaps to give some advices which he deemed necessary to the confirmation of its members, he sent for its elders, and held a conference with them, and at the conclusion of the conference delivered the very affectionate and impressive address which is here recorded; and in the passage which I have now read, he called their special attention to the doctrine which he had preached, and to the manner he had observed in doing so, "Testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." To these two points I shall confine my attention in this discourse, and then draw one or two inferences from what may be said.

I. The doctrine which the Apostle had preached was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance, simply considered, is a change of mind, whether that change be to the better or to the worse. In the passage before us, it is evidently a change of mind to the better, for it is toward God—that is, forsaking what he has prohibited, and cleaving to what he has commanded. In this sense, it is a grace peculiar to the gospel. There are just three dispensations, under one or other of which we can conceive man to be placed—a dispensation of innocence, a dispensation of mercy or forbearance, and a dispensation of retributive justice. Under the first and last of these, repentance cannot exist. Under the first, as that under which our first parents originally were, there is no call for it. Under the last, as that under which the fallen angels are, there is no space given for it—consequently, it can exist only under the second, the dispensation of mercy, which is that of the gospel. It is, as I have now remarked, cleaving to what God has commanded; but that cannot take place without a persuasion that he is willing to receive the penitent into his favour and fellowship. Without that persuasion, the sinner, however awakened to a sense of sin and misery, must, instead of feeling and expressing penitence, sink inevitably into the horrors of despair. It is from the gospel only, or the revelation of Divine mercy, that that persuasion can be derived; for it is there that God is revealed, reconciling a guilty world unto himself. Therefore, if the Gospel be unknown, repentance toward God, as a saving grace, cannot exist in any mind. On this principle, it is described in our Church Catechism as "a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience."

Again, faith, simply considered, is the assent of the mind to the truth

of any proposition on the authority of testimony. In the passage before us it is restricted, and has for its specific object the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men. It must, therefore, be also peculiar to the gospel, as Christ and his salvation are its leading and fundamental subjects. Considered in this light, it is a full and implicit assent to all the doctrines which he has taught by his Word and Spirit, and a dependence on his merits alone for pardon and eternal life. It is a moral principle, both implying a conviction of the necessity of holiness, and operating as a motive to its practice.

These two branches of the Apostle's doctrine have thus an intimate and a necessary connection. The one cannot be explained, or even conceived, without a direct reference to the other. Thus there can be no repentance toward God, where there is no belief that Christ suffered to bring us unto God. Neither can there be faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, where there is no hatred of sin, which made him to suffer, and no love of holiness, which he requires in his people. But though thus intimately and necessarily connected, they have each its peculiar and distinguishing characteristics. Repentance refers principally to that holiness without which no man can see the Lord—its necessity, nature, and operations. Faith refers principally to the mode of regaining that holiness, unfolded in God's revealed will. Both their connection and difference are obviously expressed in these words of Paul, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Coming to God is the act of repentance. Coming to him by Christ is the act of faith. A true penitent, then, must be a sound believer, and a sound believer must be a true penitent.

But the ministry which he had received from Christ was to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Wherefore, if repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was all that he testified to the Ephesians, we are to infer that in these two things he comprehended the whole gospel; and that these were all that he testified is evident from his own declaration—"I kept back nothing from you, testifying," &c. &c. That the gospel is indeed comprehended in repentance and faith, may be easily perceived, by attending to it in that simple form in which it is exhibited in the holy Scriptures. There it is designated, good tidings—good tidings the import and amount of which no human sagacity could have even conjectured, and therefore entirely distinct from any thing previously known. There it is exhibited, not as a mere system of morals, but as a preternatural arrangement of Providence, revealed and executed by the Son and Spirit of God, for the deliverance of lost creatures from the power and consequences of sin—an arrangement completely consistent with the honour of the Divine attributes, and the perfect freedom of the human will. It is

not, indeed, exhibited in a regular systematic form. The manner and periods of its full development rendered that impossible. It is embodied in the Scriptures at large, and, therefore, to know it in all its bearings, relations, and influences, these Scriptures must be consulted and understood. In several detached passages, however, we have a summary view, or an abridgement of it; thus, John iii. 16, and 2 Cor. v. 19: But whether we attend to it as expressed in its full detail of particulars, or in any of these abridged forms, it is evident that everything peculiar to it may be comprehended under one or other of these two particulars,—viz., restoration to God's image and favour, and the manner in which that restoration is effected.

But the nature and appropriate peculiarities of these are what belong to, and are implied in, repentance and faith, as now described; therefore repentance and faith form the substance of the gospel. Accordingly, they were preached as such by Christ and his Apostles. Thus we are told that he came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." Thus, also, Peter framed the whole of his discourse on the day of Pentecost, to persuade the Jews to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, or, in other words, to profess their faith in him. And in like manner did Paul, in his discourse to both Jews and Gentiles, at Athens—"But now God commands all men everywhere to repent," &c. In short, this was the spirit of the commission under the authority of which all the Apostles were appointed to act.

But the gospel is addressed to us as intelligent and moral creatures. It is therefore equally the object of our investigation and practical regard. Accordingly, repentance and faith are presented to us both in a doctrinal and in a preceptive character. In the passage before us, we are to consider them as presented to us in both, because both are implied in the gospel, or rather, as we have already observed, form its sum and substance. Thus, then, everything peculiar to its nature, whether truth, or duty, or motive, the Apostle testified to the Ephesian brethren, and thus was he enabled to take them to record that he was free from their blood, and had not shunned to declare to **them** the whole counsel of God.

II. Let us next attend to the manner in which he preached this doctrine of faith and repentance. It consisted in testifying it to Jew and Gentile. The word translated *testified* has various significations. Its most simple meaning is proving anything by testimony, as in Hebrews ii. 6. What we prove by testimony is something in which we wish

- others to be and to feel interested. Hence it is used not only to prove, but to enforce. Thus (Acts viii. 5), "Being pressed in spirit, he testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ;" and again (xxviii. 23), "he expounded and testified the kingdom, persuading them concerning Jesus."
- By comparing the general object of his ministry, mentioned in the 24th verse of that chapter, with the particular object of it among the Ephesians, stated in the passage before us, we see that the word ought to be here understood to include both—to *prove* and to *enforce*. Repentance and faith, considered in their doctrinal character, he proved, that is, established by suitable arguments, that they were required by God, and were requisite to final salvation; considered in their preceptive character, he enforced them by arguments and motives drawn from reason and revelation.

By thus explaining and inculcating the whole counsel of God, he wisely observed the order of nature. He first instructed them in the truth, design, and character, and suitableness of the gracious dispensation entrusted to his ministry, and then required the concurrence of their wills and the obedience of their lives. He established the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and on these principles urged them to go on towards perfection. He laid the foundation of repentance from dead works, and faith in the Lord Jesus the Saviour, and thereon established a superstructure of holiness. Indeed, without attention affectionately given to this important fact, there can be no vital practical Christianity. A reformation may be induced, but it will be superficial and formal; a faith may be extorted, but it will be speculative and inoperative; and hence that melancholy deficiency of Christian knowledge which so extensively prevails in the professing Christian population in the land. Men are satisfied with a name to live. The leading and distinguishing truths of the gospel are either entirely overlooked, or are loosely regarded as a something rather to be assumed than seriously investigated; the consequence of which is, that its operative influence on the heart and conduct appears to a very limited extent. But the Apostle, with a wisdom and an energy peculiar to a mind under Divine influence, not only gives no countenance to aberrations from the simplicity of the gospel, but frames all his discourses so as completely to guard every candid and enquiring disciple against them. Impressed with the belief that privilege and duty are so immediately connected, that the latter cannot be performed if there be not a previous acquaintance with, and participation of, the former, he uniformly proposed both to mankind with equal earnestness and convincing illustration. Among the many proofs that might be adduced in support of this fact, his Epistle to the Romans is worthy of our particular study.

But farther, the Apostle testified repentance and faith to both Jews and Gentiles. His origin and early habits might have inclined him to confine his attention to the Jews. His special commission might, on the other hand, have inclined him to confine it to the Gentiles. To the latter, indeed, he did give his time more fully than to the former; but to both, was he equally disposed to be useful, and he therefore preached to both without regard to any external circumstance whatever. Thus in his ministry he observed an undeviating impartiality. The middle wall of partition being broken down, he, as a minister of the true Catholic or universal Church, addressed the message of mercy to all indiscriminately, of whatever nation or kindred. Knowing the grace of God—the value of the gospel—the comforts it imparts—the hopes which it inspires—the prospects which it affords—the joy unutterable and full of glory which it ultimately bestows—he nobly trampled on every selfish and bigotted consideration, and with an enlargement of Christian spirit laboured, and preached, and prayed for the salvation of all. Romans i. 14–17.

From what has been said, I infer

1. That repentance and faith are both essential to the attainment of eternal life. Though this has speculatively, it has not practically, been assented to by many professing Christians. Some have attached a high importance to repentance, but have at the same time almost entirely overlooked the necessity of faith. They think that if a man refrain from vicious habits, and be humane, charitable, just, and sober, he has attained the great end of all religion—he is a good man, and therefore must be held to be a good Christian; and they not unfrequently look upon and speak of those who attach a special importance to faith in Christ, as enthusiasts and visionaries, and sometimes go the length of representing them as favouring the doctrine that man may sin that grace may abound. Others, again, have attached a high importance to faith in Christ; but at the same time have forgotten the equally high importance which belongs to repentance. They think that if a man believe the gospel, and entertain a zealous attachment to a sound creed, he must be a true Christian; and they not unfrequently look on those who insist on the necessity of repentance and good works as persons destitute of evangelical views, ignorant of the truth, attached to legal doctrine, and going about to establish their own righteousness.

Both these classes of persons proceed on erroneous principles—on partial views of the subject. The Holy Scriptures, from which alone we derive our knowledge of it, do not authorize them to give any such preference to the one grace or to the other, and far less to indulge in

mutual, uncauid animadversions. A very slight acquaintance with the Scriptures may make any *candid* man perceive that both are equally essential, though not in the same sense. A man without repentance, which is the principle or seed of holiness, is dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore incapable of enjoying heaven. And a man without faith, which is the uniting bond with the Saviour, is under condemnation, and has no title to the enjoyment of heaven. A well-informed Christian *knows* that that is truth. An experienced Christian *feels* that it is truth. He is not more assured that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, than that to be saved he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I infer,

2. In the second place, that to invite mankind to give a practical attention to the graces of faith and repentance is the chief object of the ministry of the gospel. This, as has been already remarked, was the grand object of our Lord sending his apostles into the world; and in the discourses and epistles of Paul, the chief of the apostles, we find that that engrossed his whole time and attention. We may, therefore, assert that every religious discussion which has not that immediately in view, or is not directly subsidiary to it, must be foreign to the gospel ministry. It may display talent, or knowledge, or imagination, and bring a tribute of praise to its author, but to the edification of the body of Christ it is of no real use whatever.

The uniform pursuit of that object, however, is not always agreeable to the hearer of the Word. Some desire to hear nothing but doctrinal disquisition; others desire to hear nothing but moral illustration; others the consolations and promises of the gospel; others general duty; and others what may excite their feelings, please their taste, and move their sensibilities. Those persons, having no thirst for the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby, cannot but be dissatisfied and chagrined by the plain and repeated statement and enforcement of faith and repentance. But the ministry ought to be in faithfulness, pursuing the grand and momentous object of its institution by those means which the great Head of the Church has appointed, uninfluenced by the caprice of ignorance, or the arrogance of misguided zeal — aiming at the overthrow of Satan's kingdom in the heart, and not the unprofitable gratification of novelty or morbid sensibility; in short, withholding no part of the counsel of God, whether palatable or unpalatable to the mind of the hearer; but testifying it *fully, freely, plainly, and affectionately*, so that it may be unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish—to the one the savour of life unto life, and to the other the savour of death unto death.



## SERMON XLVII.

CHRIST SPIRITUALLY GIVEN, IN ALL HIS FULNESS, TO HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. J. McLAGAN, KINFAUNS.

“It is the Spirit that quickeneth : the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”—JOHN vi. 63.

THE day before Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, he had fed five thousand men with five barley loaves and two fishes. Persuaded by the miracle, that this of a truth was the prophet who should come into the world, the multitude followed Jesus next day to Capernaum, not from the love of his doctrine, “but because,” said he, “ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.” “They said, therefore, unto him, What sign shewest thou, then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus saith unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread *from Heaven* : but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. The Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven ; and they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that he saith, I came down from Heaven?” This was the first subject of their murmurs. They could not believe that he *came* down from heaven.

Jesus reproofs and represses this objection, by solemnly affirming that he, and he only, had seen the Father ; that the Father had sent him to give everlasting life unto all that should believe on him ; and that as many as were taught of God would infallibly come unto him. Then, returning to the other branch of his statement, as to his being the true bread, he solemnly repeats it. “I,” says he, “am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead ; this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from

heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever ; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore," again "strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" This was the second subject of their murmurings. They could not believe that Jesus could give his flesh for meat.

On both these points—first, as to the fact of his having come down from heaven, and next, as to the possibility of his giving men his flesh to eat—the unbelief of the Jews began to infect his disciples. Many even of *them*, when they heard this, said, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" When Jesus knew in himself that his *disciples* murmured at it, he said unto them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" Thus he remonstrates with *their* doubts upon the point of his having come down from heaven. He does not mean to say that his human nature had ever been there ; for assuredly it had not. He does not mean to teach that his Godhead had ever departed thence ; for he fills heaven and earth eternally with his divine essence ; nor can he at any time, in that respect, be absent from any place.

But when and where soever he will, he can give sensible tokens, glorious manifestations, of his presence, to his creatures, whether angels or men—and can withdraw them again at his pleasure. He could appear to Abraham in human form on the plains of Mamre, to Moses as a flame of fire in the bush, to the people of Israel as a pillar of light over the tabernacle and in the temple. Just so, in heaven, had he of old given bright and majestic displays, suited to the place and the inhabitants, of his being, presence, and greatness, as one in substance with the Father and the Spirit, yet distinct in person. But when God sent him to redeem our world, the symbols of his presence vanished from the celestial throne, and appeared on earth. And how did they appear? In the Babe of Bethlehem, in the Man of Sorrows that compassed the land of Judea doing good, in the patient sufferer that mourned and expired a crucified outcast on Mount Calvary. In this sense had he come down from heaven ; and now he checks the unbelief of his disciples on the subject, by informing them that they should one day see him, which they did, ascending up to heaven again. This from his lips might well restrain their first doubt ; and of the second, namely, whether it was possible that he should give them, as he had said, his flesh to eat, the answer is in the words of our text. "It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Let us attend, then, to the meaning of this declaration.

It is evident, however strange, that when Christ spoke of giving

himself for them to eat, the people understood him literally. They took the saying in its plain, direct sense; no wonder, therefore, that it seemed harsh and incredible. But it was no time for him to speak in express terms,\* and to announce himself openly as the Messiah; they had meditated just the day before to take him by force and make him a king. Hence he continues to speak in figure; but after they had begun to inmur, he puts that figure again and again more broadly, and more strongly than ever, with such significance and such emphasis, as ought, even at the moment, to have made them suspect he was speaking parables, and might afterwards, upon a little reflection, have assured them that he was. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." "This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead." "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." One would think that when with such earnest repetition he forced into their ears such unsparing language as this—when, besides, he thus called the same thing at one time bread, and at another his own flesh and blood—especially after he had just told them (v. 35) that it was by *believing* in him that men should never hunger, and by *coming unto* him that they should never thirst—nay, that just as he lived by the Father, so men were to live by him—one would think that they must, of necessity, have perceived he was speaking metaphorically, and could not possibly intend literally to invite them to such food as was never presented to man, but in the extremities of famine, or at the horrible feasts of savages and cannibals. But no. Their minds were so engrossed with the miraculous loaves and fishes which they had eaten—so filled with the manna which had long nourished their fathers, with little toil, in the wilderness—so intent upon obtaining from "the Prophet who should come," similar earthly supplies and comforts for themselves and for their children—that they could only see the worldly sense, the carnal meaning, the "*flesh*," as it were, of his words, while the "*spirit*" of them was high above out of their sight. But "the flesh," says our Lord, "profiteth nothing"—nothing toward that spiritual and eternal life of which alone he spake. "Their fathers had ate manna, and were dead"—they themselves had eaten the loaves, and should die—nor would the case be altered, if any thing so monstrous could be imagined as their actually eating, by way of food, the flesh of Jesus. That would save neither soul nor body

from destruction. As regards alike the salvation of the <sup>the</sup> soul, and the blessed resurrection of the body, "It is the spirit that quickeneth"—the spirit, that is of his words, not the grosser meaning of them which strikes the ear, but the great, the holy, the powerful truths of God which they reveal to the soul. "The words which I speak unto you," he repeats it, "they are spirit, not flesh,"—they tell of spiritual, not of carnal things—and therefore also "they are life"—the means of imparting to him that believes them, not a sinful, perishable life on earth, which should rather be called a death, but a holy, everlasting, *real* life in heaven.

No doubt it is true of all our Lord's parables and parabolical sayings, that it is the spirit, not the letter, of them that quickeneth; but let us take this truth at present merely in its connexion with the sayings of our Lord in the context, and inquire, for time limits us to that one question,—

How Christ spiritually gives us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink.

Now, in answering this question, two points require consideration; first the thing itself which Christ imparts to his people; and next the manner in which he imparts it.

1st, *His flesh and blood* is the thing given; and what is *spiritually* meant by this? Doubtless his entire person. For Christ is one, and cannot be broken. His body, soul, and Godhead, though distinct in their natures, are united in their personality. In thought they may be separated, but they are joined in fact. It is impossible spiritually to receive a part of Christ without receiving the whole; and whosoever does not receive him whole, hath no part or lot in him whatsoever. It is true he gives by name only his flesh and blood to the Jews, and these were really given; but can any one suppose that such as received *them* were to have no interest in his soul?—no benefit by the sovereign wisdom of his understanding, the unbounded love of his heart, or the tenderness of his sympathy with the afflicted? Surely it was through these higher workings of his soul that the toils and pains of his body were both endured and made effectual. Much more does the like reason infer the giving of his Godhead to his people; for if, apart from that, the gift of his human soul and body were sufficient, and their salvation could be communicated in the *mere man*, wherefore did God work the wonder of wonders, that in this man should dwell ALL THE FULLNESS of the Godhead bodily? And if in him dwells bodily all the fulness of the Godhead, shall the infinite wisdom and power, and love, and mercy, of him who made all things and upholds all things, that is Christ, be of no avail to those on whom Christ is bestowed as their Saviour? Surely it is this which gloriously perfects and crowns the good which they receive by the *works* and sufferings of Christ's human nature, that they likewise receive all the riches of his Godhead, *in these works* and sufferings, and along with them.

2d, It will be more clear, however, that Christ gives himself entire to his people, when we consider again *in what manner* it is that he gives himself. And here I do not dwell upon that eternal covenant with the Father, in which the "unspeakable gift" was provided and made sure to his elect. Neither do I enlarge upon the fact, that when the Divine nature of the Son of God became incarnate and was clothed in flesh—when he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham—when he did so for the very purpose of accomplishing for us in the human nature, what could not possibly be done in the Divine—this was giving his whole person, as God-man, to his people, by an action more expressive and significant by far than any words which can be framed to declare it. The truth is of itself apparent, and shines in its own light. That to put off the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and to fix the abode of his Godhead in the substance of a despised and persecuted man, in order, through the deepest possible abasement of both natures, to rescue all that received him from sin and death, this was INDEED to impart his entire self to them as the true bread of God which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life unto the world.

Yet it was not only in this act of his incarnation that he so gave himself; he does it likewise in the exercise of every one of his offices. Consider, for example, what was the work of his Priesthood—the only instance we can at present overtake. In his priesthood, he put himself as "Surety" for his people, under the law which God had given to man, but which man had broken. He undertook to fulfil the righteousness in which we had failed, and to undergo the penalty which we had incurred. The sin of any one believer deserves a hell of sorrow and death; but "God laid upon him the iniquity of *us all*." In making the atonement he was oppressed with the very curse that would sink us into darkness. He endured the very wrath that, like fire, would devour our spirit; and, sin excepted, he died, in soul and body, the very death which sinners die; persisting therein till such time as a true and full satisfaction was made to the offended justice of Heaven for the sins of the world. *Here he gave himself*, and that not partially but *entirely*. For let us consider. Could pure Godhead yield the obedience of a man, or endure man's labours, pains, and sorrows, and at length give up the ghost under wrath for sin? That was impossible; and, therefore, in doing and suffering these things, Christ *gave his human soul and body*. Could a mere man, whose utmost services, allowing them perfect, were due on his own account, and could only deliver his own soul, undertake for so many myriads of mankind, apostate as they were, and already fallen? Could he work out a righteousness adequate to replace their unnumbered shortcomings, or abide a vengeance equivalent in the judgment of God, and in the exigencies of his moral government, to the collective horrors of their

punishment? No, that could not be; and therefore Christ brought the whole worth, the greatness, the glory of his Divine essence and perfections, to add infinite value and weight and efficacy to his human works and sufferings, as the willing surety of sinners. In this he *gave* his Godhead. So it was neither of Christ's two natures, apart from the other, that either did or could accomplish this marvellous work of atonement; but it was his Godhead in man, and his manhood in God, his whole matchless person, undivided in action and merit, as it is inseparable in being, that he gave, in this first exercise of his priesthood, as the bread of God that giveth life unto the world.

But there is a second part of our Saviour's priestly function, that is, the Intercession. In making intercession also—in pleading our cause at the right hand of God—Christ gives himself whole and undivided to his people. For, “having come an High Priest of good things to come, not by the blood of goats and calves,” says the Apostle, “but by his own blood, Christ entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” The ground, then, on which, in the heavenly temple, he rightfully asks and obtains from the Father every communication of good to sinners, is that very obedience unto death—that great propitiation—in which, as we have already seen, the riches, both divine and human, of his entire person, were lavished and expended for our sake. On earth the sacrifice was made, but it is presented in heaven. There the wounds of his mortal flesh received on the cross—together with the agonies of his soul, when his God forsook him—and both these conjoined with the humiliation of his Divinity, when all its glory lay shrouded in the ignominy and woes of that insulted, persecuted, murdered man—there on High, the whole of these things together are offered before God, as the one righteous foundation—the one acceptable and precious good desert—the one prevailing, triumphant, and glorious plea, on the strength of which, he receives for his people all righteousness, grace, and salvation. But who is capable of so bringing merits like these *to bear*, in the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of their own immeasurable worthiness, and in the full strength and tenderness of their hold upon the Father's love, except that Son of God and Man alone, in the one unexampled complexity of whose person only, it was ever possible that they should be contemplated or realized? None can adequately wield such wonders, but he that hath matchlessly achieved them.

Nor is it only, thus in relation to the Father that the work of intercession requires and employs the assembled attributes of his twofold nature. It is in relation to us also, and to our necessities. Think of the Redeemed as one vast household spread through all corners of the earth, and continued, by the crowding succession of its members, from

the beginning to the end of time. Consider its perilous station in an apostate world—its cruel enemies, visible and invisible—its own blindness and weakness—its divisions and backslidings—its numberless hazards, conflicts, and tribulations—and instantly it will appear that none but a Divine Intercessor, whose wisdom can embrace the entire scheme of its destinies, and at every moment espy the future in the causes now operating, is capable of asking, from hour to hour and from age to age, the very blessings which the Church requires. The necessity of such wisdom becomes yet more manifest, if we descend into the various and complicated relations which are constantly springing up amongst the minor sections of this great family toward the world, toward each other, and toward the Church at large. Still farther, when we come down to congregations, households, individuals, and think what kind of watchfulness it must be, that shall mark by number and by name every soul of God's elect, as it comes into being—what kind of forethought and prudence it must be that can solicit from the hand of God, for every man of that countless multitude severally, according to the peculiar position, temperament, and temptations, and wanderings of each, those precise restraints, instructions, and graces which are best fitted were it but to turn him at first from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God—surely we must become thoroughly sensible that such knowledge is in truth no other than the Divine. Reflect, in short, how weak, inexperienced, and defenceless is the spiritual childhood of the recently converted—by what fierce struggles and artful temptations the manhood of every Christian is sure to be thoroughly tried—what numberless infirmities and necessities—what indescribable dangers and distresses beset his whole pilgrimage through this hostile land, and pursue his steps over the gloomy frontier of death, until he reach the heavenly portals—and say, if any advocacy but that of God at the right hand of God, could suffice to give each of us a perfect and satisfying assurance, that the needful aids and benefits of every description, prepared in manner, in measure, and in season, would infallibly be imparted to his own soul, until, rescued from all the power of evil, it were lodged in the bosom of its eternal rest? We need, my friends, we need a Divine Intercessor on high; and as such, the Lord gives himself to be the life of our souls. But, oh! how encouraging to know that in the same undivided person, our own nature also pleads—that he who sits with the Father on that glorious throne, while the Son of God, is also Woman-born—that, when Immanuel prays, that prayer is the wisdom and the love of Jehovah himself, uttered through the mind and heart, and lips of a man—a man who, looking down on this earth as he pleads, can see none of his servants involved in any trouble of which he had not himself the sharpest experience—but if any cry to him out

of misery and want, he it was that hung naked and thirsting on the cross; if any bewail in his ear the wounds of unrighteous judgments and lying tongues, his was the heart which reproach had broken; if any groan forth their lamentations for insult, and oppression, and outrage, he was the mocked, the buffeted, the crowned with thorns, the rivetted with nails—he was the prey of ruffians—he was the scorn of hypocrites. Do any exclaim in their fear, when compassed by the snares of the Devil, or pressed above measure, beyond strength, by the onsets of hellish enmity?—on him came the hour and power of darkness. Are any, for their sins, pierced with the arrows of the Almighty, whose poison drinketh up their spirit?—and, when about to sink in despair, do they cry, as did the disciples on the sea, “Lord, save us!—we perish?”—it was he that, in his agony, when sorrowful even unto death, poured out prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to help him, and was heard, in that he feared. In his heart, therefore, there is a living sympathy with these and all our other afflictions; and the prayers and entreaties of every believing sufferer come up before God commingled and blended with the like sentiments and feelings of the great Intercessor’s bosom. How clear, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ gives his whole self—the energies, and virtues, and mercies of his entire being—for the life of his people, in this priestly work of Intercession, as we found before he did in the priestly work of Atonement! And what happiness is ours, my brethren, if we but know it and believe in it, who have always, interceding for us in heaven, one who, as God, is made an high priest for ever, “after the power of an endless life,” and yet, as man, is not untouched with a feeling of our infirmity, having been tempted in all points even as we are, yet without sin!

It were easy to shew, that not as their priest only, but also as their prophet and their king, Immanuel gives himself undivided to his people. For, as a prophet, his forerunner, John, thus testifies of the Word that was made flesh. “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” And referring to his kingly power, Paul expressly declares, that because, “when he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” But time for-



bids our entering more particularly on these high and glorious truths. Nor can it be necessary, after the employments and fruition of a day like this\* to do more than just remark, that it is by his word and ordinances as the means, made inwardly effectual by the quickening grace of his Spirit, that the Son of God and man presents, imparts, insures himself, undivided and full, to the souls of his people, and makes good, in their present experience, the unsearchable richness—the inexpressible pleasantness—of the gift. O that we could as largely receive as he bounteously bestows it ! O that the eyes of our understanding were enlightened to behold in the Scriptures, as in a glass, with adequate distinctness and truth, the bright reflections of that glory of this Lord, which we shall see hereafter face to face ! Would that our knowledge and our assurances concerning him bore the same character of immutable certainty with the blessed realities themselves, of his person, his functions, and his great salvation ! Would that our faith, our hearts' trust in him, were strong and fixed in any thing like a just proportion to the infallible and everlasting all-sufficiency of his will and power to save us ! Would God that our love were animated indeed with those living fervours of our Redeemer's heart, which prompted him, by stooping from above, into the very gulf of our deaths and sorrows, to lift us out of that bottomless destruction up to the paradise and throne of God ! Then should our labours, our sacrifices, and if need were, our sufferings too, be worthy of His disciples, who esteemed it meat and drink to do the will of his Father in heaven, even when that will was that he should die on the accursed tree. And then should we find that his words, being spirit, are life also—a present life within us—the earnest and pledge of that glorious day, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Are attainments like these within our reach ? By the grace of our God they are. Let us therefore earnestly strive to make them our own, and let us, without ceasing, bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,—that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith ; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints—what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory, in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

\* A communion Sabbath.

## SERMON XLVIII.

SPIRITUAL DEATH AND LIFE.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM MACKENZIE, NORTH LEITH.

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”—Eph. ii. 1.

THE former condition of the Ephesians, and their happy deliverance from it, are the two distinct subjects presented to our attention in the text. In their original state “they were dead in trespasses and sins;” but, when the Apostle sent to their Church this Epistle, they were partakers of a great and glorious transformation. “You hath he quickened.” Let us, in humble reliance on the guidance and blessing of God, advert to these two subjects, and conclude with attempting to apply to ourselves what we may gather from Scripture, regarding the old and new States of the Ephesians.

I. The original condition of the Ephesians. They were dead in trespasses and sins.

The two words, “trespasses and sins,” have almost the same meaning. They imply the breaking, not keeping, or offending against the moral law of God. The moral law is that rule which the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth has promulgated, in order to direct angels and men how they are to attain the end for which he created them, which is, to glorify and enjoy him. It comprehends the two great commandments, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” and all the precepts that flow from them. This law is *spiritual*, demanding the internal service of the will and affections, as well as the external obedience of word and deed. It is *holy*, being infinitely opposed to every, even the least taint of moral evil. It is *just*, demanding for the Creator, and assigning to the various orders of creatures what is respectively their due. It is *good*, being calculated to produce the greatest amount of good collectively and individually in the universe of God. It is framed by the wisdom, maintained by the unchangeableness, enforced by the omnipotence, and lasting as the eternity of the infinite and unsearchable Jehovah, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation—and from whose uncontrolled and uncontrollable will, result the being and the well-being, the life and the death, the duration or the annihilation of all created existencies.

The various intelligent beings who are placed under the moral law

may be divided into two great classes, differing from each other far as heaven is distant from hell—they who are alive in holiness and obedience, and they who are dead in trespasses and sins. In either of these two classes is every rational being in the universe. The former class comprehends the angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and true believers upon earth. All these are endowed with a principle of spiritual life in different degrees of energy and manifestation, but in all producing similar effects of love to God—of holy affection, desire, will, word and action—a principle constantly tending to entire conformity to the will, resemblance to the character, and obedience to the moral law of God. The second class comprehends the devils, the damned souls, and all unbelieving, impenitent persons on earth. All these are destitute of the principle of spiritual life. There is a moral separation between their souls and God, and in this consists spiritual death. As natural death consists in the separation of soul and body, so spiritual or moral death consists in the separation of the soul from God. This is the death of the soul spoken of in verse 5th of this chapter—"Even when we were dead in sins hath he quickened us"—and in various other portions of Scripture. What are the qualities or symptoms of a soul in the condition of the Ephesians—the state of spiritual death? We may mention five negative and four positive symptoms, or, in other words, what a dead soul has not, and what it has. The negative symptoms of spiritual death are

1. *The want of spiritual perception.* As a dead body has not the five bodily senses, so a dead soul has not the spiritual senses. It neither sees, nor hears, nor tastes, nor perceives the perfume, nor feels the reality of the spiritual world. The glory of God shineth forth in the Gospel of Christ, but dead souls are blind and cannot see it. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." 2 Cor. iv. 3-4. God speaketh by his providence and by his inspired word in loudest tones of reproof, admonition, invitation, and love, warning, and terror; but the dead soul is deaf, like the adder that heareth not the voice of the charmer, charm he never so sweetly. The dead soul cannot taste and see that God is gracious; and though, to the senses of a renewed soul, "because of the savour of his good ointments," the name of Christ "is as ointment poured forth," yet to the dead soul he is as "a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground, having no form, nor comeliness, or beauty, or desirableness." From this quality of want of spiritual perception, resulteth the second defect—

2. *No spiritual understanding.* Rom. iii. 2, "There is none that understandeth." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit

of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." It was in reference to their want of spiritual perception and understanding that the Lord said to Isaiah respecting the Jews, Isa. vi. 9, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." From the want of spiritual sensation and understanding, results a third deficiency—

3. *Want of spiritual desires.* "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." The purity and holiness of God's will and law are not perceived or understood, and therefore cannot be loved or desired. There is not, and cannot by possibility be, a single self-originated desire after God and holiness in the breast of the natural man. As well might the heart beat, and the blood circulate, in the mouldering and worm-consumed carcase.

4. *The dead soul has no spiritual strength.* The natural man is, in spiritual exertion, absolutely helpless and powerless. When a dead body can restore itself to life, then can a spiritually dead soul draw near to God, or restore itself to spiritual soundness, health and holiness. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. xiii. 23, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him." "The carnal mind cannot be subject to the law of God."

5. *The dead soul has no capacity of spiritual enjoyment.* Dead in trespasses and sins, it can have no true or permanent happiness. It has committed two great evils—has forsaken God the fountain of living waters and true felicity, and hewn out for itself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Happiness, as it can come only from God, so it can be enjoyed only by a soul spiritually alive unto God. Apart from God, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Having thus enumerated five qualities in which the spiritually dead soul is deficient, we may now mention those which such a soul has.

It has entire corruption and depravity. From the top of the head to the sole of the foot, it is all over wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. This corruption is constantly increasing in virulence and noisomeness. All the dispensations of Providence, and all the outward means of grace, and even the ordinary motions of the Spirit, tend to aggravate its symptoms and add to its violence. The very gospel is to such a soul the savour of death, just as the warmth of the sun and

the breathing of the air, while they invigorate the healthy, and recruit the weak, the emaciated, and even the diseased, do excite and hasten the process of putrefaction in the soul-deserted body. And, if the very means of grace tend to draw forth and increase the corruption of the dead soul, what shall we say to the fearful influences exerted by the Devil, whose bond-slave this soul is, and by the world, which is, as it were, the nursery in which the Devil, who is God of this world, rears and prepares his children for hell? Is it a marvel that, under such a course of training, many souls are brought, even in this world, to such a pitch of depravity and ungodliness,\* as to commit that sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in that which is to come.

From entire depravity proceeds the second positive quality in the dead soul—it is constantly committing actual sin. If utterly depraved, how can it do otherwise? “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “How can a bad tree produce good fruit?” “O, generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Mat. xii. 34. ~~It~~ is impossible that from a dead soul any thing can proceed except trespasses and sins. The very alms—the very prayers—the very tears of such a soul are sinful, depraved, ungodly, and unholy, and they deserve not reward, but punishment.

A third property of a spiritually dead soul is, that it is under the wrath and curse of God. The Scripture saith, “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” Rom. ii. 9. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Gal. iii. 8.

The fourth and last property which we shall mention is, that the soul in this state is deserving of and prepared for eternal death. “The soul that sinneth shall die” is the unchangeable word of the inflexibly just God. “The wages of sin is death.” Spiritual death is itself a punishment, as well as a cause of sin, and eternal death is just that punishment increased to the utmost. The ungodly rich man, who, while alive, was dead in trespasses and sins, was deserving of and meet for the place of torment, among the ever-burning flames of which he had not a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Such is a very imperfect statement of a few of the properties or qualities of a state of spiritual death. On the one hand, a soul in this state has neither the capacity of spiritual sensation, of spiritual understanding, of spiritual desire, of spiritual exertion, or of spiritual enjoyment; and on the other hand, it is totally corrupted—all that it does is sin—it is under the curse—and it is meet for the inheritance of the accursed, in the blackness of darkness for ever.

Such was the original state of the Ephesians before the gospel of Jesus

was preached to them by the Apostle Paul, and such the state which he describes in this letter, written to them from his prison at Rome, by saying in the words of our text that they were dead in trespasses and sins. But we must hasten to consider,

II. The change which the Ephesians underwent, so as to bring them into the state in which they were when the Apostle transmitted to their Church this Epistle—"You hath he quickened." Under this head we might direct your attention to the five following particulars:—the Nature, Author, Qualities, Effects, and Subjects of this change.

1. As to the Nature of this change. It was to the souls of the Ephesians what the resurrection of Lazarus was to his body, the actual communication of life to what was previously dead. It was not a mere external reformation from idolatry to the worship of the true God—from wickedness to honesty, sobriety, and decorum of conduct; nor was it a mere change of views, opinions, principles, motives, and character. It was a quickening of the dead, a resurrection from the grave, a rising to newness of life. By the agency of the Holy Spirit, an indestructible principle of everlasting life was implanted in their souls. There was a new creation; "old things passed away, behold all things became new;" they passed from death into life; and out of the dead mass of corruption a living creature was born of the Spirit, to be an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus.

2. Who was the Author of this mighty transformation? Not the Apostle; he utterly disclaims the power, as well as the honour, of effecting it, 1 Cor. iii. 5-6. Not the Ephesians themselves. Can the dead quicken the dead?—can the body burst the bond of the grave?—can the Spirit return to its deserted and corrupted mansion?—can the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, produce in itself spiritual life?—can it—will it—all depraved as it is, remove its own corruption? Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away—as soon shall Satan renew upon his detestible spirit the holy likeness of God. No; "the sons of God are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "You hath he quickened." The Ephesians were passive as the clay in the hands of the potter (Rom. ix. 21)—as the branches in the hand of the husbandman. Rom. xi. 24. "It was God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-with he loved them, even when they were dead in sins, that quickened them," Eph. ii. 4. God the Father foreknew, and ordained, and predestinated them to be saved by Christ; when the hour appointed came, being called by the voice of Christ in the gospel, they were made willing, in the exercise of saving faith, to obey his call, because at the same moment they were quickened by the Holy Spirit, who was given to Christ by the Father, and sent forth by him to their hearts and consciences. "Thus it was by,

grace that they were saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it was the gift of God ; not of works (*i.e.* by their own power or merit), lest any man should boast ; for they were his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them." (Verses 8, 9, 10.)

3. As to the Qualities of this change. If our time permitted, we might describe it as being supernatural in its origin, nature, and effects ; immediate, abiding (1 John ii. 19), saving, transforming, and a most glorious and happy change, giving glory to God, and conferring happiness on men. We might also dilate on the qualities and properties of that new state into which it introduced the Ephesians ; and, in contrast to the negative properties of their dead state, we might shew how spiritual perception was enjoyed by them—God having opened the eyes of their minds, and commanded the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Christ Jesus, to shine into their souls, so that they were turned from darkness, and brought into his marvellous light. We might also shew at great length, and, we trust, to edification and refreshment of your souls, how the other spiritual senses were restored and exercised—how they obtained, and used, and enjoyed spiritual understanding, desire, exertion, and happiness. And also, in contrast to the positive qualities of their dead state, we might shew how, when formerly there was entire corruption and depravity, there was now implanted a principle of holiness, perfect in kind, though, as yet, imperfect in degree and in manifestation—how they were enabled in some measure to bring forth the fruits of holiness in speech and behaviour—how they became objects of God's favour and forgiveness—and how they were daily advancing in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

4. The Effects of this change of being quickened from spiritual death were twofold—inestimable privilege, and holy fruit.

The privileges are at great length set forth in this and the two next chapters—they were brought nigh by the blood of Christ—they were reconciled to God—they had access by one Spirit through Christ unto the Father—they were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God ; and many other such inestimable privileges were conferred on them who were quickened by God. The holy fruit in heart, speech, and behaviour, brought forth by a soul quickened from spiritual death by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and union to Christ, is described and recommended in the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of this Epistle, to which we refer you for the subject of your private reading and meditation on the evening of this holy day.

5th, and last place on this head, the Subjects of this change. " *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*"

It was not all the inhabitants of Ephesus that were subjects of thi

saving change—nor all who heard the gospel from Paul (Acts xix. 9)—nor even all who were baptised and admitted to the privileges of the visible Church—but it was “the saints in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus.” These, as we read in chap. i. v. 4, had been chosen before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love—they were predestinated unto the adoption of children (v. 15)—they heard the Word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and they trusted in Christ as revealed to them in that gospel, in whom after that they believed, they were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. It is a little flock to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom (Luke xii. 32)—it is a small and limited number that find the strait gate, and walk on the narrow way (Mat. vii. 13)—it is a few who are effectually called out of a world lying in wickedness; and it is true this day, and among us in this place, as it was then at Ephesus, that few comparatively are quickened from death in trespasses and sins—that many are called but few are chosen—that many say, Lord, Lord, but few do the things which Christ saith.

III. Let us now endeavour to apply to our own use what we have learned respecting the Ephesians.

They were dead in trespasses and sins; and are not we also, my brethren, in the same deplorable, helpless, and hateful condition? Yes verily, we also are the children of disobedience, and by nature the children of wrath even as others. In times past we also walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and even by nature children of wrath, even as others. We were the enemies of God, the servants of the Devil, and the heirs of damnation.

But the Ephesians were quickened from their death in trespasses and sins, were created in Christ Jesus unto good works, were brought nigh to God by the blood of the cross, and were full of faith in the Lord Jesus, and of love to all the saints. Have you been quickened? Have you in consequence obtained new and spiritual perceptions of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus? Have you earnest and abiding and growing desires after perfect conformity to his will and laws? Are you spiritually minded? Is it your sincere desire and resolution, by the grace of God, now and henceforth to depart from all iniquity, and to endeavour to keep all the commandments of Christ? Do you rely on Christ as your atoning and interceding priest? Do you apply to his Word for direction? Do you pray for his Spirit to enlighten and strengthen



you? and do you love all who bear his image? These are marks of a state of grace. Examine yourselves whether you have them. If you have them not, you are still in your old state of condemnation—dead in trespasses and sins.

Should any one be saying, "I greatly fear that I am dead, but Oh that I knew how I may be quickened!" Be of good courage, my brother, and despair not, for the mercy of God is unsearchable, and may reach even to you. Although many shall perish, yet you may not be among the multitude—though few shall be saved, yet you may be of the favoured few. You cannot quicken yourself. No man, or minister, or book, or Bible, or sacrament, or mean of grace upon the face of the earth can quicken you. God alone can quicken the dead. This is his own especial prerogative, and his glory he will not give unto another. But will God quicken me? My brother, I cannot tell. God knoweth. This I know and tell you, that he can quicken you if he will; and for your further encouragement, I may say, that, in bringing you to fear that you are dead in trespasses and sins, he has given a token for good to your soul, that peradventure he is about to have mercy on you. If you ask me for some practical directions, I say unto you—1. Carefully avoid, to the utmost of your power, all known sin; 2. Diligently employ and attend upon all the instituted means of grace; 3. Earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to quicken, regenerate, and vitally unite you to Christ; 4. Acknowledge God's *justice* in your eternal condemnation; 5. Bow to his *sovereignty*, as giving him a perfect right to dispose of you as he pleases; 6. Plead his *mercy and grace*, in your own behalf, for Christ's sake; 7. Endeavour to behold the Lamb of God, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Be assured of this one thing, that Jesus, with all his saving benefits, is freely given to thee in the offer of the gospel; and therefore your first and great work is to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If you are doing these things, you have every reason to hope that God for Christ's sake has had mercy on you; and if you try to do them, you have no reason to despair.

If any one in this assembly be quickened from his death in sins, to him I would say, You have been quickened in order that God in Christ may be glorified in you and by you. You are a monument of the marvellous grace of God, therefore glorify the grace of God by ascribing your salvation to sovereign grace as its origin, depending on efficacious grace as its means, and living to the praise of redeeming grace as its end. Live upon the privileges of the Covenant of Grace, so as that you may live in its duties, and at length enter into its rewards in the likeness and enjoyment of God to all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XLIX.

THE DUTY OF EXAMINING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

BY THE REV. ROBERT BUCHANAN, D.D., FREE TRON CHURCH,  
GLASGOW.

(Preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 1844.)

"Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh and also the night."—ISAIAH xxi. 11

THE prophecy to which these words belong is both brief and obscure. It stands, so to speak, apart and alone, disjoined equally from that which precedes, and from that which follows it. It is like a voice uttering, suddenly and solemnly, at the dead of night, some ominous ejaculation, startling us out of sleep, and gone before we have well awaked. We feel that there is in it a depth of meaning which we would fain investigate, but the mysterious messenger who gave it forth has withdrawn, and has left us no clue to his dark saying. It is not my intention to occupy much of your time with any attempt to explore it. Instead of indulging in fruitless conjecture and speculation, I shall content myself with shortly stating that which alone can with any certainty be gathered out of it; and having done this, shall proceed at once to consider and use it as a call to examine the signs of this present time.

The prophecy in which the text occurs is entitled the "burden of Dumah." From this circumstance, and from the fact that the inquiry which it puts and answers is represented as coming "out of Seir," there can be no doubt that the prediction refers to Edom, or Idumea, for which Dumah is another name, and of which the chief city and stronghold was in Mount Seir. That country, as well as the land of Israel, was destined to fall under the yoke of the King of Babylon, when he should come up, as the staff of the Lord's indignation, to execute his righteous judgments upon a backsliding and disobedient people. From that oppressive yoke, long and heavily as it was to lie on the Jews, they were at length to obtain a signal and glorious deliverance. The Prophet whom the Lord had set as a watchman, and had commanded to declare what he saw in vision, had explicitly foretold Babylon's overthrow, and the rescue of afflicted Israel. Was Edom to share in its neighbour's triumph? Was the blow that should strike the fetters from captive

Judah, to bid the dwellers in Mount Seir also to go free? "Watchman, what of the night?" How long has its gloom and darkness still to endure? Is the Heavens still curtained with clouds and tempests? Is there no star of hope beginning to twinkle in the opening firmament? Does no ray of gladsome light streak the horizon's verge? Is there no blush, however faint, suffusing the Eastern sky, and telling of the coming dawn? Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

To this repeated and earnest call the watchman replied, "The morning cometh and also the night." Yes, the day will soon break, already it is struggling with the darkness, and ere long will chase its thick shadows away. A season of returning light and liberty is at hand. The "morning cometh;" but let not Edom therefore exult in fancied security. It shall be but the transient gleam of sunshine before the black and bursting storm. *The night cometh also*—a night after which no morning shall ever dawn. "For my sword," saith the Lord in another chapter (the 34th) of this same book, "shall be bathed in Heaven; behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment. \* \* \* For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day: the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever." What a terrible significance do these words lend to the brief but ominous announcement! "*The morning cometh, and also the night.*" Nettles and brambles have come up in the palaces and fortresses of Mount Seir. Her once magnificent capital has become a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. When the adventurous traveller makes his way into its rugged and awful solitudes, the only sound that falls upon his ear is that of the vulture, or the cormorant, or the bittern, calling to her mate by day, and the great owl, or the screech owl, calling to her mate by night. With the sacred volume in his hand, as he gazes on the desolation around, he hears the Lord's own voice challenging him to compare the one with the other,—the prediction uttered twenty-five hundred years ago, with the facts spread out before his eyes. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; not one of them shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line; they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein." Is. xxxiv. 16-17.

It is in the contemplation of such things as these that we recognise

the appropriateness of the Psalmist's call, to "Come and behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth;" and it is when the impression of their awfulness is filling and solemnizing our minds, that we enter into the full meaning of the words which the Lord himself subjoins. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm xli. 8-10.

And now, brethren, without attempting to penetrate further into the words before us, in their prophetic application to Edom, let us proceed to consider and use them as a call to examine "the signs of this present time." Our Saviour charged it as a sin against the Jews, that while they could "discern the face of the sky and of the earth," they did not discern *that* eventful time. May not a like condemnation be justly pronounced against the men of our own day? Out of the multitudes who so closely watch every indication of change that appears on the ever shifting horizon of the commercial and political world, how small, comparatively speaking, is the number of those whose hearts and minds are similarly exercised as to the signs and prospects of the kingdom of God. For the thousands and tens of thousands everywhere, whose eyes are intently turned to the discussions of senates, the deliberations of statesmen, the councils of kings, to gather some intelligence bearing on the security of property and the interests of trade, there is but one here and another there tremulously alive to the safety of the ark of God, and putting forth in deep solicitude the inquiry of our text, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"

I. Now the first thing which, in reference to this inquiry, the words before us suggest, is the undoubted and important truth that it is of the Lord himself the inquiry must be made. His eye alone seeth under the whole Heaven; and he only knoweth the end from the beginning. Nothing can be more utterly fallacious and worthless than any mere calculation of human probabilities in regard to the future progress of Divine truth—in regard to the course it may be destined to run. When Jesus of Nazareth had been put to an ignominious death, his few and obscure disciples dispersed in terror, and when the handful of peasants and fishermen who had been the companions of his ministry were shut up, unnoticed and unknown, in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, who could have foreseen that the blast of the trumpet, blown by this small and feeble band, was to shake down the mighty Jericho of that universal heathenism which then overspread and enslaved the benighted earth? When, fifteen hundred years thereafter, a poor emaciated Augustinian monk was wearing himself out in his gloomy cell in the terrible conflict of an awakened conscience, which all his self-righteous austerities

could not satisfy or soothe, who could have foreseen that in that single man the Lord was training a soldier, who should confront, single-handed and alone, the gigantic power of the Man of Sin, and liberate the half of Europe from his galling and destructive yoke?

But, on the other hand, if human sagacity would thus have been baffled on the one hand by unlooked for triumphs to the cause of truth, would it not have been equally confounded on the other by unexpected defeats? When the day of gospel light was breaking forth in such glorious splendour upon the world in Apostolic times, shedding its blessed beams in one single generation from sea to sea, and from the river almost to the ends of the earth, who would have ventured to anticipate that so bright a day was to be succeeded by the dark ages, the long dismal, dreary centuries during which the few remaining witnesses prophesied in sack-cloth, amid bonds and stripes, and imprisonments, and death? Again, when the Lutheran Reformation, like a strong wind out of the clear north, was sweeping off from the nations the dense cloud of Papal superstition, and revealing once more to their wondering eyes the long-hidden Sun of Righteousness, who would have thought that the horrid cloud would again return to spread its murky folds over so many of its ancient fields, and that men choosing darkness rather than the light, would love to have it so?

But though human skill be thus impotent to unveil the future, we have a more sure word—a word of Divine, and therefore unerring foreknowledge, to which we do well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn. It is to the Lord we must turn, if we desire to know what is in the womb of time, and say to his inspired seers, in the words of the text—"Watchman, what of the night?—Watchman, what of the night?"

II. And this leads me to observe, as the second thing of which the text, as now used, may remind and assure us, that however discouraging the aspect of things may, in many points, appear—"the morning cometh"—a day of unprecedented brilliancy and joy, when the kingdom and dominion, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the Son of Man; and when, emancipated from the strife and turmoil of incessant wars, and enjoying and exhibiting a foretaste and emblem of the heavenly state, the rest of Zion shall be glorious. Yes, the Lord's watchmen, not once or dubiously, but explicitly, and a thousand times, have proclaimed that such a "morning cometh"—the morning of that millennial day when there shall be nothing to hurt nor to destroy in all God's holy mountain, and when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

To define the exact period that has yet to revolve before that "morning" shall come, is hard, perhaps impossible. I shall not attempt the task. It would take greatly more time and space than this discourse can at all afford, to make intelligible even the data on which any such calculation must rest. Suffice it to say, that there is at least a marvellous amount of harmony among those who have been longest and most earnestly searching what time the Spirit did signify, when, by the prophets, he foretold the blessed era in which "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," shall be laid hold on and bound a thousand years, and shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and a seal set upon him, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." (Rev. <sup>xix</sup>xx. 1-3.) I do not mean that there is no discrepancy among them; but this much must be allowed by all who have studied the subject, that they are to a great extent agreed in the conclusion, that the night is far spent, and that the day is at hand. The mighty image in which Nebuchadnezzar beheld, in vision of old, an emblematic representation of those great revolutions the kingdoms of this world were successively to undergo, previous to their becoming the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, has already seen its entire length visibly and palpably reflected in the history of the world. The Babylonian empire, then subsisting gorgeous and magnificent in its wealth and grandeur, was the head of gold. The breast and arms of silver found their antitype in the brilliant dynasty of the Medo-Persians. The belly and thighs of brass were the very picture of the dominion of that race whom their own poets have been wont to designate the brazen-coated Greeks. And finally, the legs of iron were realized to the full in the iron strength and resistless energy of the Roman power—a power whose decay and dissolution was at the same time prefigured with equal significance in the feet, that were part of iron and part of clay—a power, the breaking up of which into ten distinct kingdoms, as illustrated by the ten toes of the image, the ten European sovereignties that sprung out of the ruins of the Roman empire have abundantly and conspicuously explained. It was in the days of these kingdoms that another power was to arise, diverse from all the rest, and before which three of these kingdoms should fall—a power that should have eyes like a man, and a mouth speaking great things—a power that should speak great words against the Most High—that should wear out the saints of the Most High—that should think to change times and laws. And who, by these marks, can fail to identify the Papacy—that tremendous scourge and dark apostacy into whose oppressive hands dominion was to be given for "a time and times, and the dividing of a time," or, as it is elsewhere explained, for three prophetic

years and a half—a day for a year—that is, for one thousand two hundred and sixty years. Could we settle definitively when that dismal reign of the antichristian tyranny began, there would be no difficulty at all in now gathering the answer to the enquiry—"Watchman, what of the night?" We could then tell to an hour how far the night had run its darkling course, and how soon the morning dawn must appear. It is chiefly on this point that enquirers are not at one. But still the limits within which a fair historical investigation must fix the commencing point are so very narrow, that, begin where we will, if we have any due regard to ascertained and undoubted facts, the time and times, and dividing of a time, the sand-glass of the hour and power of darkness reigning in the Papacy, cannot now have long to run. I repeat it, therefore, as a thing not to be reasonably questioned, that the prophetic image of Nebuchadnezzar has seen its entire length, all but to its very lowest extremities, reflected broadly and palpably in the actual history of the world. And it is therefore no hap-hazard conjecture, no arrow shot at a venture, but a fair and reasonable deduction from Scripture evidence, we offer, when we venture to say, that already the angel may be gathering up the encorgies of his collected strength for that sudden and tremendous stroke, by which, with the Stone cut without hands, he shall smite the image upon his feet, that were part of iron and part of clay, and break them in pieces; and then shall the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold (every form and kind of the antichristian power), be broken in pieces together, and become like the chaff on the summer threshing-floor, and the wind shall carry them away, and no place shall be found for them, and the stone that smote the image shall become a great mountain, and shall fill the whole earth. (Daniel ii. 35.) In the full confidence that such a glorious event is in store, we can take all the comfort of the watchman's glad and grateful announcement—"the morning cometh."

III. And this brings me to the third and last thing which the text, as now used and applied, suggests; and it is, that we must rejoice with trembling, for while the morning cometh, there cometh also the night. But here a marked distinction must be made from the case of Edom, to which the text directly points, and to which we, in the outset, referred. When the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion shall have come, it will be night to her adversaries and oppressors; but to Zion herself it will be a bright and glorious day. In the application, therefore, we are now making of the text, we must reverse the order in which those events shall arrive, of which the watchman spake, when, in answer to the question, "What of the night?" he

briefly replied, "the morning cometh and also the night." Edom's morning has come and gone, and the long night of unending darkness, that was to follow, has settled down upon Seir. Zion's morning is still future, however near. Her night still endures. If we would read the text so as to pourtray her destiny, we must read it thus—"The night cometh, and also the morning." Yes, the night—a darker, gloomier, heavier night than heretofore, has brooded over the Church of God. Scripture seems to proclaim as yet, and perhaps soon, to come. For though, in the blessed assurance that the morning cometh, the heavens must rejoice, and they that dwell in them, there is a woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, because there cometh also, and cometh first, the night—because the devil cometh down in great wrath—in wrath all the more bitter and intense, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

In looking abroad upon the earth, we must never forget, though we are ever prone to do so, that amid the endless diversity of names, and sects, and nations, we see contending together, on the subject of religious truth, there are really but two parties engaged in the war—the powers of darkness and the powers of light. The contest is as old as the days of Cain and Abel, and must endure till that glorious time when the enemies of Christ shall at length be made his footstool. There is an enmity inherent between those who are spiritually allied to the promised seed of the woman, and those who are the children of the wicked one. The spirit and principles by which they are respectively animated and directed are irreconcilably opposed. Satan, the strong man armed, dwells in the one, and when they are unassailed, all may seem to be tranquil, because his goods are in peace. Christ is the victor, stronger than he; and it is when he comes to bind the strong man, the fiercest and most desperate struggle begins. It is this fact which explains why a season of revival in the Church is always a season marked by the bitter enmity and busy hostility of the world. Such a spiritual awakening is a note of alarm sounded through the camp of the enemy of souls. It is a call to arms—it is a warning to stand upon his guard—it is a threatening of danger to his kingdom—and he is too vigilant to neglect the admonition. Your time will not allow that I should attempt to trace the marks of such an awakening in the Churches which these later years have witnessed. They are more or less familiar to all, and my fathers and brethren must know them well. This only will I venture to say, that never perhaps since the days of the memorable Reformation did Satan's empire feel more distinctly beneath it than now the first heavings of that spiritual earthquake which is destined, at the set time, to shake it into hideous ruin.



It were, however, grievously to misunderstand the actual state of things, to imagine that this pleasing picture has no dark reverse. The principle already noticed must prepare us to anticipate that this onward march of the good soldiers of Jesus Christ would neither be unnoticed nor unopposed. They only who are ignorant of Satan's devices can be blind to the subtle and formidable agencies he has been incessantly organizing and steadily bringing into the field. Not one point where danger menaced his territory has been left unprovided with means of resistance. Calling to his aid the alarm which the growth of an infidel democracy had been instilling into the cabinets of the leading continental powers, he has employed it to produce that all but universal reaction in these kingdoms in favour of Popery, by the help of which the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition is again climbing up into the seat of his ancient ascendancy. In Ireland, the generous spirit of freedom has served to enable him to clothe once downcast Romanism with the insignia of office and power. In England, the desire to protect, against threatened innovation, the ancient institutions of the kingdom, has opened for him a way by which suddenly to revive the Popish dogmas and lordly pretensions of High Church bigotry, under the venerable pretext of restoring the Christianity of primitive times. And has Scotland escaped, in this general and too successful display of Satanic strategy, put forth to counterwork, and, if that could be, to overturn and destroy the cause and kingdom of our Lord? Let recent events furnish the reply. The Church of our fathers, visited, in a measure at least, with times of reviving and refreshing from the presence of the Lord, had begun to live and breathe—to put on her beautiful garments—to loose the bands of her neck—and to come forth in the face of the world, a faithful, uncompromising witness for God. She had begun to look with other feelings, and to speak with other words than heretofore, in surveying the errors and corruptions that prevailed. She had begun to cry aloud, and not to spare. Abuses *within* the Church, that once were not only tolerated but loved, she had set herself openly and uncompromisingly to condemn. While, on the other hand, the ungodliness of the world—its infidel tone—its luxury—its selfishness—its love of gain—its encouragement of errors—its invasion of the sanctity of God's holy day—against these and similar sins and defections she had begun to lift up her voice with some measure, at least, of that divine energy and faithfulness which is communicated by that Spirit whose office it is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He must have been deaf indeed who has not heard the world's angry tones in reply. And, as we look around us, every day seems more clearly to shew that the husbandman is coming, with his

fan in his hand, and that, ere long, there will be a yet closer and mightier sifting on his threshing floor. The world will not endure the Church. The more spiritual teaching of all evangelical churches—their more faithful discipline—their purer communion—will be an offence to multitudes within their own pale. They will seek shelter either in some lower and laxer denomination of Christians, or join perhaps the Romanist and the infidel, in undisguised warfare against the true followers of the Lamb. It is in that direction things seem rapidly to be tending; and, in studying holy Scripture's prophetic page—in asking the inspired watchman, "What of the night?"—there are things set before us which seem plainly to foretell that this sifting process will gradually go on, till the Church and the world stand fairly apart, and are made ready for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. And blessed be God, though in the first fell encounter the Witnesses shall be slain, and their dead bodies be dragged about the streets of the city, ere long they shall arise and mount up to heaven, and then shall that great cry be heard—"Now are the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

Meanwhile, fathers and brethren of this reverend Synod, what are the duties to which the prospect of such events as have now been alluded to specially and urgently calls us?

1. It calls us, in the first place, to cultivate a spirit of brotherly love towards all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and to draw closer the bonds of communion with all evangelical churches. If the enemies of truth and righteousness be thus manifestly and rapidly collecting their forces, and combining them for a grand assault upon the Redeemer's kingdom, it is surely high time that the friends of the gospel should be coming to a better understanding with one another. It was, accordingly, with no common interest I read, this very morning, of the proposal which has just been made by the distinguished author of "The History of the Reformation," and adopted at a large meeting of the evangelical divines and clergy of Switzerland, that steps should be immediately taken, by correspondence with the friends of the truth in Germany, France, Holland, Britain, and America, to embody, in a common confession of faith, the grand fundamental doctrines on which they are agreed, and thus to manifest their real and substantial unity to the world, and to lend new force and energy to their testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. In the second place, the signs of the times solemnly and urgently call on us to redeem this present time. It is perhaps but a breathing-time before the conflict begin—a time, therefore, when the faithful

soldiers of Christ must be burnishing their armour, and strengthening their defences, and making ready for the battle. To be at ease in Zion at such a moment—to give way to sloth and indolence—were to be traitors to Christ's cause. It is now, if ever, we are called to make full proof of our ministry—to be instant in season and out of season—always abounding in the work of the Lord.

3. And finally, in the third place, the times call us to "pray without ceasing." It is not in our own might and prudence we can be enabled to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. And if we would endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, it must be by living near to him who hath said—"My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And if there be anything that will strike terror into the heart of the great adversary, and paralyze all his movements, it will be the sight of the Churches on their knees, crying mightily unto God, giving him no rest till he arise and remember Zion.

## S E R M O N L.

THE LORD'S JEALOUSY AGAINST BACKSLIDERS CONSISTENT WITH HIS UNCHANGING LOVE.

BY THE REV. GEORGE SMEATON, AUCHTERARDER.

"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him."—PSALM LXXXIX. 30, 31, 32, 33.

WHAT a triumph Satan will obtain in Scotland, if we lose sight of the Redeemer's reign in the heart, after all our declarations that he is a King! And the very same temptation, if at first resisted, is usually brought to bear upon us in a form more subtle and more captivating. I believe the text is in no common sense addressed to Scotland; and he that hath an ear let him hear.

In the context, the Covenant between the Father and the Son is at large unfolded. The Eternal Son undertakes to come down to this world to put on our sin and our wrath, that God may love us as he loveth him. On this Mighty One our help is laid (v. 19), and when he comes, he is strengthened for the work given him to do. His Sonship is discovered when he cries, "Thou art my father;" and his every step in doing and in dying is taken in the room of all and every man, whose person he sustained and for whom he acted as a surety; for they were given him by the Father. The believer, realizing this oneness with his Lord, says, I am Christ's righteousness, yea, as Christ, the well-beloved before the Father; and evermore he hears the Mediator saying, I am yonder sinner's guilt and sin, for I bore him on my person on the tree. It is then taken for granted (v. 30), that the seed of Messiah shall go astray; but their sins, it is added, do not break the Covenant, which stands fast for ever more; for it was not made with us, but with the Son for us. For evermore the savour of Christ's sacrifice is as fresh as ever, and he ever cries, on behalf of all his own, Let them be brought back again white as ever—whiter than the snow. But we shall now, by God's help, analyse and open up the words as simply as we can. Notice,

I. The seed of the Messiah stand in his relation to the Father, sons

by Grace because he is the Son by Nature. *His children.* The full meaning, we take it, is, they are children in him ; for the expressions *his children* and *his brethren* are interchangably used—"He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying, Behold I and the *children*, which God hath given me." Heb. ii. 11-13. He raises all whom the Father hath given him as near himself as possible, to the rank of sons in the family of God, with a title to the heavenly glory. The foundation of our being children is, that Christ is God's only-begotten Son in a sense peculiarly his own before the world was ; and we find the order of the Covenant, when he said—"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," not to *our* Father, for there is no such equality, but to my Father by nature, and yours by being found in me. This relationship is Christ's of right, it is ours of grace through him—an undeserved boon ; and God becomes our Father only because he is the Father of one so near and dear to us.

Christ's Sonship is not a mere official Sonship, beginning when he took the flesh. The relationship is from everlasting, founded in nature and not arbitrary ; and in like manner the love involved in it had no beginning, and can have no end. The Son dwelt in the Father's bosom before the world was, dear to him as his own soul. Had the Sonship begun in time, as some men vainly speak, we could imbibe but little comfort ; for there might be constant fear, that what had a beginning might also have an end. But when we see that the Sonship is founded in the very nature of the Godhead, and can no more change than God can change, a joy unspeakable is derived from the discovery. And is not the thought an overwhelming one, that to us it should be given to stand within this bond between the Father and the Son—to be taken up, as far as may be, into this relationship, and remembered in inseparable connection with God's dear Son ?

Do we look at the act of power put forth in calling us into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord ? We are redeemed by power, as well as price, from being children of the evil one ; and if Jesus, by his cross, made Satan's title but an empty name, the question now is simply one of power—who is strongest ; and in the word of the gospel, Jesus goes throughout the world to claim his own, and by a mighty hand to dispossess the strong man armed of his lawful captive.

Do we look at the change in our relation to the Lord the Judge, in passing into the family of God ? When the Most High has seen the sinner consenting to be righteous in the Saviour's righteousness—to be saved in God's own way—sentence of acquittal is given forth by the holy Judge the very moment we believe on Jesus, and there is joy in heaven on account of it. It is passed even now in the court of

heaven, and the judgment-day will but proclaim it unto all worlds, but not make it more perfect than it is now. It is passed, moreover, in a man's own conscience, and then there is assurance, peace, and joy unspeakable.

Do we look at the frame of soul with which the joint-heirs are imbued? Though the Lord Jesus is in heaven till the times of the restitution of all things, yet is he ever with his children, by his spiritual presence, till the end of the world. Their experience is not a mere dim resemblance of his own, but the very same in the measure in which they apprehend him. His peace is our peace—his joy is our joy, though he has an oil of gladness above his fellows—his spirit is ours, one spirit with him—his life is our life; for we live not, not we, he liveth in us—in a word, there is not one feeling or emotion that pervades the holy soul of the man Christ Jesus, in the sanctuary above, but vibrates in a greater or a less degree through all the ranks of the redeemed, whether in the bliss above, or in their lowly dwelling place below—"I in them and thou in me."

Do we look at the love within which Messiah's seed are taken? They are more precious in God's sight than all the universe, and he loves them with a real father's love. It is not different love the Father bears to Christ's people from what he bears to him: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.) Our capacity, indeed, is limited, but if we are Christ's, we are loved with the very same love in kind, yea, taken within the bond of that love that from eternal ages has knit the Father to his only Son. Lift up your heads ye drooping saints. The more you taste God's glory, and desire him, will it not ravish your soul, that this God loves you, and has set the very love on you that he has set upon his Son?

Or do we look to the standard, the image after which God's children are to be conformed? They are to be conformed to that loveliest of holy scenes, the life, the character, the mind of Jesus—conformed to the image of God's dear Son. As they have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly; and at last they shall be like him, when they see him as he is. Yet a little while and the reviled sons of God shall shine brighter than the sun in a glory that will make kings and great men wonder.

II. The Lord narrowly observes the new obedience of his children, and whether they will go astray. Allusion is made to that declension as proceeding step by step. When God says, "*If his children forsake my law,*" he names the first step when they lose a relish for his presence and his holy will; when he adds, "*and walk not in my judgments,*"

he names the next step when they walk no more with him, and lose the fear of God upon their hearts; when he adds, "*if they break my statutes,*" he shews that all comes to open high-handed sin at last, although the first step was but a loss of secret delight in God. Perhaps we may, with more advantage, advert here to the first commencement than to the open fruits of declension.

The sin that dwells in us comes on with noiseless step, disarming all suspicion, under the guise of weariness, or, it may be, suggesting delay in spiritual service, and it is little suspected, nay, spiritual slumber is accounted sweet. Indwelling sin is of dreadful strength; and if we cannot trace out all its windings and deceitfulness, if it is a friend within to every temptation from without, and wars in every power of the soul with the Most High, is not the unwary soul most sure to fall? Never did men occupy such an awakening position as the disciples in the garden. The three were honoured out of all the sons of men to be with Christ in the crowning act of his obedience, when he formed his high and final act of choice to drink the cup which the Father gave him. He had often been with them in Gethsemane's quiet retreat, as if he loved the scene of his future trial; and now, when he was to gaze on the eternal hill, not too great for one sin—when he was called to the highest act of his obedience, to choose, as man, whether he would be cast into the wrath of God, as far as it could kindle on the Lord of glory—he wished to be refreshed by his disciples' fellowship, and surely they will watch and keep him company. Ah, no! thrice that suffering one came back as if to get comfort in this fellowship, and his sweat was great drops of blood falling from his every pore upon the frozen ground, and they are fast asleep. If it was his gentle complaint, "What, can ye not watch with me one hour?" O how many an occasion shall we trace as we look down from the heights of future glory, when we enjoyed the same forbearance of Almighty love on our way to Zion. We have begun this departure, if our thoughts turn not naturally and habitually unto God as the needle to the pole, and if less drawn by the cords of his constraining love than in other days. We have entered on a path of declension, if, like the slumbering virgins, we have lost transforming views of the glory yet to be revealed in the presence of the Lord at his coming—if we press forward the less and not the more when accepted in the beloved.

The day was, O declining soul, when you ever saw some new perfection in the Son of God, and sought some new occasion to commend him. Where is the happiness you spake of? You abuse the doctrine of conversion, if it is made a resting place for sloth, as if you might on that account be less in prayer, less in awe of God. The almighty power of God on dead souls at first conversion—the very power by which the

Saviour rose—must be as much as ever put forth on us from hour to hour ; and is God waiting to carry on the work, and are you unwilling to maintain the *same earnest* effort to be subjects of the same Almighty change ?

You have ceased to seek *the same blessings*, although they are designed to be revealed from faith to faith till we are ever with the Lord. When light from Heaven first shone on you, you were eager to *win Christ himself*, and though you feel your loneliness, you do not now desire so much to apprehend him. O how different is it now ! You once mourned over your thick darkness, and were not content with doctrines, without more glowing discoveries of heavenly things ; but now you seek not *heavenly light* as much as you did then. As to *pardon*, the very highest attainment any child of God shall know on this side Heaven, is to wash daily in the fountain, and yet hate sin as much as ever ; but in your pride you will not daily be indebted to forgiving love, and in your unbelief you will not rely upon its freeness as you once did. Remember whence you are fallen ; and if we speak of *strength for hourly duty*, the day was when you saw no reason why you should be weak when Christ is strong, or empty when it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in him ; but now, because God tries you whether you will labour for every blessing, and contend for it, you fall back discouraged.

Nor do you pursue the *same spiritual exercises*. As to private prayer, excuses multiply as years roll on. Every company and pursuit is not abandoned that unfits you for it, and the form is very irksome. If we ask how far you war with your *corruptions*, are you not weary of doing constant violence to your sinful nature, bolder now with little sins, less tender in your walk before the Holy One, and more careless in draining off corruptions daily, and by slow degrees ; and as to the measure in which you cherish *implanted graces*, time was when you strove to have them in the highest exercise, and were most of all afraid to have less of God and of his presence than on the day before. How different is it now

You pillow your soul upon a time when your tears were turned into joy, your fears into peace, your sighs into songs of praise. You trust to past experience, to past recourse to Christ, and not upon himself as the refuge from the tempest now. What if you repose on a delusion, on an awakening which was but the savour of death unto death ? It matters not what you once were, what are you now ?

But notice here, again, that when the Lord so narrowly watches if we walk in *his law and judgments*, he means the law of liberty written on the heart, which neither can condemn nor justify a child of God. The children of God do not obey to be put among the children, for they are sons already, and they obey both in the rest above and here below



with a love that casteth out the fear to which law appeals. Obedience is Heaven begun, and the sons of God rejoice to see him take his honour, and call all worlds to esteem and love him, for he is worthy. They are not under the law in whole or part, so far as it has sanctions, threats, or promises. But let us bear in mind—for there may be ere long another Antinomian outbreak—that in the measure in which we win Christ, it will be our meat to do the Father's will as it was his beforehand. Our willingness to obey just shows how far we have tasted the sweetness of the promises, and how far we have apprehended Christ.

Let us bear in mind that every child of God is under a high and holy discipline, and that true grace is certain to be tried and sifted. If Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered, though he were a Son, good cause there is that we too should be sifted. Remember that if the Lord tried Israel for forty years, to prove what was in their hearts, so if he cross our will, it is to try our faith and patience—if heresy come in to deceive, if it were possible the very elect, it is to make manifest them that are approved. Let us labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

III. God, jealous of his honour, cannot pass over the transgressions of his children without chastisement. *Then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* This rod—these stripes—may come in many a form, in personal affliction or bereavement, in sorrow or reviling, in the buffetings of Satan or the hiding of the Father's face. These visitations come not as the curse of the law, for believers are not under the law, nor does their Father disinherit them. God distinguishes between the persons of his children whom he loves and their faults which he punishes. “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.” Ps. xcix. 8.

The afflictions which God sends to prove and try his people come when they most ardently grow up into him, who is the Head in all things; but of these God speaks not here. The cross we are to bear in following Jesus is felt most keenly when most alive to God, for we must do violence at every point to the natural aversion of our evil hearts, and to a world in open arms against our God; but of that God speaks not here. The afflictions which he speaks of here are punishments, and may be easily distinguished from the other, because they come in seasons of departure from the Lord. Upon these occasions, and even for our sins of omission, in which we live more readily, the Lord allots, as his messages to Israel show, a just recompense of reward. Have we to do with a God less jealous now? If a holy God could not pass over one offence in Moses, without making him bear the mark of his displeasure,

we have to do with one the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; for *our* God is a consuming fire. The Lord, who will not be mocked, inflicts fit punishment for every declension or distrust of him. Do ye make light of small departures from the Lord, because it is a day of grace? Do ye wink at decays of grace in yourselves, at sloth or unbelief, or a defiled conscience, at lukewarmness in prayer or in holy love, as if God winked at them too? Ye shall suffer loss though ye may be saved yet so as by fire. Though God is at peace with us as Judge, his jealousy as the Holy One burneth with fire. It is told of a holy minister that he died imploring pardon, especially for his sins of omission. But more affecting than even the testimony of a dying hour, is the frown with which a God of love must visit them; and, if it be by spiritual judgments mainly that God now visits sin, the blighted religion in these souls of ours, the pointless sermons falling half-way to the heart, and the ease in Zion, may just prove that God is jealous. If any think that backsliding is a light matter because it is a day of grace, hold up the sin to the holy light of the Redeemer's countenance as he speaketh to the Seven Churches, and you will cry, who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.

We have said that there is nothing properly penal in these frowning visitations of a Heavenly Father, for they have their source in his grace, and for their aim our return to himself. They are not from a Judge, but from a Father. The Lord has no pleasure in the sufferings of his children, but there is a glory in the connection between sin and punishment which never can be broken, and he will show that sin is an evil thing and a bitter. When the warnings of Jesus in the garden could not keep the disciples awake, his rebuke was, Sleep on now and take your rest—he is at hand that doth betray me; implying that the awakening providence of God would now compel their watchfulness. Alas! how many are never aroused, till started by tremendous judgments and alarming providences! God will deal in love with us if we can be drawn by the cords of love. If kindness will not allure, the trials of a severer discipline will compel us to live near him, to cry unto the Lord in our distress.

Look at Israel, on entering the land of promise. Unmindful, after first success, of their work of vengeance on the doomed nations round them, they neither work for God nor in God; and when the angel tells them in Bochim, for their punishment, that they should not drive out those nations any more, such a day of weeping followed—such a day of repentance—as has seldom been in this dark world. But why did they not return to their first works? It seems that the courage once given them

was not given again—the Lord was not with them in such measure any more. Is this a new thing in the earth? Ah! it is common to lose first love, but all do not regain their former place. Many are but blasted trees—melancholy monuments of what they were, or might have been. Some, all zeal once, are now lame in every effort, and what time is lost if ever they recover. Could I reach some young convert, ready to take a little slumber when the Sun of Righteousness has chased away the darkness of the night, as if the keen edge might be abated, and all be well again, I would say, no quarter can be given in this warfare, till we see Jerusalem and the Lamb face to face. O, if any live as if they might safely be ever sinning and repenting, can you dread no danger?—is it only after many a fall that ye will stand in awe, when our God is a consuming fire?

The Holy One can let alone the men of the earth till the great day; but the Church, which is the holy house in which he dwells—the renewed soul, which is his temple—may not be left polluted. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.” Amos iii. 2. “The jealousy of our God smokes on all sides of his chosen ones.” What he can bear with for the present in the children of the wicked one, he cannot bear in those who are a people near him. Judgment begins at the house of God, on those who bear his image; for more heinous in God’s account, and more ruinous to souls around them, is sin in God’s people than in others.

By doubts and fears in a hesitating bosom, the Lord oft-times chastens his people, who once had joy unspeakable and full of glory. Satan is allowed to cast his fiery darts, and setting forth a long train of decays, with all their circumstances, takes occasion by some sickness greatly to terrify them, saying, “What have such to do—the guiltiest among men to do—with life to come or with Jesus here. Their hands hang down—their songs in the night are silent.” Is it not so with *many at this day*, as if wisdom’s ways were not ways of pleasantness, and her paths the paths of peace? And in most cases—I say not in all—is it not because they have sinned away their light, and peace, and strength, and now they weep as they remember Zion. They would not keep awake when they might, and now they cannot imbibe the holy joy they fain would know again. They would not leave their spiritual sloth or worldliness when they might, and now it will not let them go when they would. Who can stand before this holy Lord God? Oh! ye who live as if the Christ within were not to be the same holy image of the Father as the Christ without—who rather would be safe than holy—when put into the refiner’s fire of James or of the Prophets, what but

dross is left behind, after the wood, the hay, the stubble are burned up? Oh ye who think free grace will cover another and another sin, instead of labouring to depart from all iniquity! call to mind with whom ye have to do; for the Lord is not mocked. Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? ye who think it legal to take a single glance at your unweeded hearts—who will hear that Christ is *for* you, but who will not ruffle self-complacency by the thought that he is *in* you except ye be reprobates. “Ye cannot serve the Lord,” said Joshua to such a people; “for he is an holy God—he is a jealous God—he will not forgive you your transgressions nor your sins.” Lose not Israel views of God—Old Testament views of God, for they are not to be forgotten, but carried with you when you think of God in Christ.

IV. Our declensions do not utterly remove God's loving-kindness, because it is not founded on ourselves, but on another. It is striking to observe (v. 33), that the Lord changes the person, and when we expected to read, “*nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them,*” he drops all mention of the sinner, and, reverting to the covenant, says, “*my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.*”

The Father's love to the Son is the very foundation of the gospel. The Father cannot be an enemy to him who is his very heart. To shew that the Father cannot cease to love him, let us bear in mind that, when he came forth as Mediator, it was not a new affection that the Father bore to him, but the very same that had been borne to him before the world was. When he put off his glory and appeared eclipsed, self-emptied, humbled, the Father said of him, what had been upon his heart before time began, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When he put on his people's sin, he met the anger of an offended Judge, not the enmity of an offended Father. Even when his God forsook him, as he hung surrounded with the terrific garment of our sin, and his human soul wanted all sensible comfort, he was the object, amid all his woe, on whom Eternal love was resting. The great triumph of the cross<sup>a</sup> is, that a world's sin could not quench the Father's love. The great triumph of the cross is, that he who hung there was more pleasing in the Father's sight than even sin was hateful—that *the sin could be consumed, and yet the love remain entire*. Had this love not been as full as ever, as high as ever—had there been an interruption of it but a moment—our salvation had been hopeless. But while Christ took on him what was due to us, he did not lose, he could not lose, what was eternally his own: the light of everlasting love did not forsake, and could not forsake, the temple where it ever dwelt.

If, then, the Father's love was not abated when Jesus bore the gar-

ment of our guilt, and if a time shall never come when that love shall cool toward him, or be withdrawn, never shall it cool toward his seed, who are taken within the bond of such a love. The love they enjoy is not different, but the same—at all times alike, and in all conditions alike—even in times of dreariest declension, God's love for ever rests on all who are joint-heirs with Christ, though at the time they do not feel it shed abroad upon them. Even then they are as much beloved as ever, and Jesus is to be heard saying, "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

These words, "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him," shew us, we believe, the *proper motive to be brought to bear on sad backsliders, and the Lord's way of restoring them.* While the mind of God is here revealed, it is not as if he kept the secret to himself, but designed to be a spring of action unto us, to forestall undue despondency, lest the Spirit fail before him. If any presume on such words of tenderness—halt! they are not spoken unto you, but to the downcast child of God, at a loss to know how God can love him with so little that is pure and lovely—ready to doubt how a worm, a rebel, an enemy, can be endeared to God. When the declining soul is grieved with his own distempered heart, and his backslidings have reproved him, the Lord removes the cloudy day, by shewing that the only cause of the Divine favour is that, without a claim on our part, everlasting love rests on us because it rests upon the Son. When sin is on the soul, we are prone to think that God is turned against us, and we dare not look again to his holy temple; and to counteract this, God announces that he is unchanged—the very same he was at first. God's voice at first was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am so well pleased, that by him the guiltiest may come from wrath to grace—from sin to holiness—from death to life;—in whom I am so well pleased, that in him all guilt is swallowed up, all wrath for ever hushed, and condemnation rolled away—all controversy between God and you forgiven and forgotten,"—a heaven of light and glory open over you, and the unveiled countenance of a friendly Father smiling on you with inexpressible complacency. You then put on the Lord Jesus; you become most dear in God's sight, as free from wrath as he is free, and partakers of a love which no creature can fathom. What made you rest so sweetly under the refreshing beams of the Father's love—so firmly anchor there, when nothing amiable in you drew forth the Divine complacency? For his dear Son's sake alone, the sunshine of the Father's love first rested on your soul, and it is the same view of his unfathomable love in Christ that leads the downcast backslider to return.

The Eternal Father calls you, O backsliders, to look up from the

depths to him who giveth you his Son, and your warrant to embrace him now is not that ye received him formerly, but God's present gift, as if ye never heard that blessed name before. Seek to be one with Jesus by receiving him afresh from day to day, if you would inherit God's love; for it is by cleaving to God's dear Son anew, and not leaning upon past experience, that ye find, to your soul's joy, no wrath upon his countenance, nor vengeance in his heart, but the very heavens and the skies raining down love. The declining child of God is prone to think that God is turned against him as unworthy, and he is unworthy more than he has ever dreamed of; but in the holy of holies the merits of the Lamb are as fragrant as ever. We are ever to realize that Christ puts in his righteousness to adjust the balance between God and us. The Father never removes his loving-kindness from him, and there is no propitiation necessary between the Lamb and us. O, if you think that your sins are higher than the grace of God, that you cannot again be rendered amiable even by God's dear Son, what is this but mortified pride, because not beloved for what you are, or may have done? If a backslider refuse to lean his guilty soul on what he leaned at first, he will only pierce himself through with farther sorrow. However near we live to God, there is no other way of pleasing God, no other way of coming under the warm beams of the Father's love, than the plea from hour to hour which is founded on his Son. And, after going backward, if you doubt whether the Father's smile again can settle on you—if you question whether God can again be pacified by what is laid up in Christ—you cast contempt as much upon the treasures of his grace, as if you hoped to be forgiven because your sins are small.

## SERMON LI.

JESUS IN THE MIDST.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ARNOT, ST PETER'S, GLASGOW.

" They crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst "—JOHN xix. 18.

JESUS in the midst ! This has ever been his place, and for ever will be. Whether in his original essential glory as God, or in his lowest humiliation as suffering man, or in his exaltation to the mediatorial kingdom as Immanuel, still it is " Jesus in the midst." Whether it be angels adoring, or saints believing, or sinners reviling, or devils blaspheming, the eyes of all things must wait on him. Whether with joy or sorrow—whether with hope or despair—whether with love or hate—the necessary attitude of all created being is " looking unto Jesus." He is set the central sun of this and all other worlds ; and though multitudes of the fallen so hide in the dusk of earth, that they are not enlightened by his beams, they cannot break the band by which they are kept revolving round him. They are dragged unconscious after his chariot wheels, and made the monuments of his power and glory. Though a fallen world keep out the melting rays from its icy bosom, it cannot break loose from its centre—it must appear to the praise of his justice or his mercy in the great and terrible day.

" Whom seek ye ?" In reply, ye put in the request preferred of old by certain Greeks who came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast—" Sir, we would see Jesus." As I have been sent, as it were, over the brook before you to prepare the feast, I have tried to prepare according to your liking. I shall try to set before you him whom your souls love. I do not propose at present to preach about the state of your own hearts, or the condition of an ungodly world. I neither lay down the various duties of men, nor open up in order the provisions of the covenant. I do not direct your thoughts either to the working of your own spirits within, or to the prospect of the Church without. Expositions of doctrine, and exhortations to duty, will be, for the present, incidental and subordinate. My main object throughout is to bid you " look unto Jesus," or rather to set before you, as I find him revealed in the Word, the altogether lovely one, that his beauty may attract—his love constrain you,

“Where have they laid him?” The hand of the Father is on him, exacting the penalty of guilt; and the sins of men are on him, putting him to grief—these, “where have they laid him?” Lo, here! “Come and see.” “They crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” But, when we came up to behold the face of Jesus, why present this aspect of his countenance?—why bring us to see him in that place of shame? Is it not like the cruel, tantalizing question of Joseph’s brethren, when they held up the garment, torn and bloody, before the weeping eyes of Jacob—“This have we found; know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no?” Yes; I confess that Jesus appears in this verse as the “man of sorrows.” It is only by the shame and the spitting—by the cross and the thorns—by the blood and the tears—that you can recognise him now. “What is thy beloved more than another beloved, oh thou fairest among women?” He is distinguished by the depth of his distress. You may know him by this heaven-imprinted mark—“His visage is marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”—Isa. liii. 14.

Yet it is of design that I have sought in the pages of the Word for this aspect of the Saviour to present to you. He is infinite God. He changeth not. Throughout his mediatorial work, he is the same Jesus. Whatever be the enemy whom he meets for his people, he is the mighty God their Saviour. Whatever may be the depths into which they have fallen, the everlasting arms are underneath them. Whatever point on the Mediator’s path faith’s straining eye may be fixed upon, from the first eternal purpose of the Father down to the judgment of the great day, he appears to his redeemed altogether lovely. This suffering—this shame is a part of his work, and even it is glorious. Behold the Lamb of God! Behold him in the midst of sinners—of sinners the chief! This is his place, believers! Had he not come into that place, ye could never have been taken out of it. His place is *in the midst*. For us he is there—in the midst of men and devils—of sin and death, and the grave and wrath—in the midst of all these foes victorious—taking away their sting, at the heart of them, in our nature, quenching their life and power. In midst of all his enemies he is the governor. He has left none unvanquished, that we might be more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

Besides the lessons that are strictly in the text, we may get others that are suggested by it. Besides examining the substance, it may be profitable to look, in the light of Scripture, to the distinctly marked shadow which it casts both before and behind it. The text declares only the place of Jesus among sinners when he suffered on the cross; but it suggests the place he held in his preceding mediatorial work, and will hold in



his subsequent mediatorial reign. On the principle, then, of noticing what it suggests, as well as what it expresses, let us search the Scriptures to see "Jesus in the midst," *before*, and *at*, and *after* his suffering unto death. Finding him here occupying the *centre* as a sufferer among sinners, we may, by the guiding light of Scripture, show that he occupies the centre, whether suffering or reigning, whether surrounded by angels or men, saints or sinners. Let an arc be given, however small, and by the known principles of geometry, you may restore the whole circle of which it forms a part. So, from this brief affirmation, which fixes the central place of the suffering Jesus, we may, by aid of the Scriptures, trace his path from everlasting to everlasting, of which this step forms a part not the least glorious. It could not otherwise be. His position in the midst, is a necessity of his being—a mark of his Godhead. Let faith look on things unseen. In the expanse of Revelation, trace the course of this "Light of the world." Follow the path of this Sun of Righteousness circling through the sphere of Redemption, and mark that he is all glorious, and glorious alway.

*First*, then, as suggested by the text, search the Scriptures and see "Jesus in the midst," from his first goings forth of old, down to the time of his suffering on the cross.

*Secondly*, as declared in the text, see Jesus in the midst of sinners suffering.

And, *thirdly*, look past these sufferings, look within the vail, and see him on the midst of the throne.

I. The central place of the Mediator in his pre-existent state and preparatory work.

In the purpose of the three-one Jehovah, ere any dependent being was made, this same Jesus stood—stood in the midst, agreeing with the Father and the Spirit, to the covenant of redemption. Between the Father's decree in eternity, and the Spirit's work in the fulness of time, stood the Son—the second person of the Godhead, stood for his people, their covenant head; and had he not stood in the midst then, there could neither have been the loving purpose of the Father from eternity, nor the sanctifying work of the Spirit in time. The eternal decree at first, and the present "glorious ministration," are the two extremes of a complete salvation; but Jesus is in the midst, and they "are complete in him."

When first angelic hosts were made, and began to exercise their new-born instincts in desiring to look into the works of God,—when first they began to scrutinize that one work of God which was of earlier date than their own being—the covenant of mercy to men—they found Jesus

already in the midst. They found the Eternal Son the sum and substance of that first wonderful work of God. The sight, though but dimly revealed then—the sight Jesus, in the midst of God's covenant of redemption, drew from these morning stars their first united song of joy—Jesus in the midst of the covenant was the creature's first triumphant anthem, and he will be the last. The song was new when first it burst in unison from the assembled morning stars; and when all the redeemed have been gathered to join in it, it will still be new.

When our first parents fell, darkness covered the earth; when God first gave a promise of mercy, a beam of bright light broke in: and this same Jesus was set in the midst of that beautiful prospect which then opened up to the view of men. There he was, the seed of the woman, set before faith, when first faith was needed and imparted to the lost. That which illumined the darkness of our first father's prospect, and beautified the face of this accursed world, was this same Jesus set in the midst. So with Abraham, who saw his day afar off, and was glad. Faith's sight of an innumerable offspring could not have gladdened the exiled patriarch's heart. The many nations to spring from his body, passing before him in prophetic vision, could not have sustained his sinking spirit. It was not on the multitudinous progeny that the hope of Abraham rested, but on that one seed, set the glory in the midst of his own people Israel, to whom should the gathering of other people be.

The same place he held at every period in the progress of the Church. In all their afflictions, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. Yielding the blessing to Jacob's wrestling, and appearing to Joshua as the captain of the Lord's host—going before the camp in the wilderness, and dwelling between the Cherubim in the holy place—exhibited in the types, and proclaimed by the prophets—he was in all their movements a defence round about his people, and the glory in the midst of them. He would never leave them nor forsake them. When the families of Israel assembled to eat the passover, the Lamb of God stood revealed to faith in the midst of each little circle, as he did among his disciples afterward when the doors were shut, whispering, "peace be unto you." As the trials of the Church grew more severe, so much clearer manifestation did the Redeemer give of his presence with them. And it was when the temple was destroyed and the nation scattered—when the witnesses were few and the adversaries many—when the persecutor had cast the last witnessing remnant into a fiery furnace and heated it seven times—it was then that "one, like unto the Son of God, appeared in the midst of them."

When the fulness of time had come, those who came expectant from  
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afar, and those who waited for consolation in Israel, were congregated round the child Jesus. A multitude of the heavenly hosts—the star, the shepherd, the wise men—all were found “looking unto Jesus.” The men of prayer, who were looking for God’s salvation, ready then to depart in peace, the devout and honourable women who departed not from the temple day or night, but now that the mercy seat was no longer the dwelling-place of him who had been their Saviour, watched incessant in the outer court, to hail the glory of the latter house, when first he should appear. In the midst of all these the child Jesus appeared when he became Immanuel.

When doctors assembled in the Temple, to teach that law which had long been obscured, the child Jesus was in the midst, for he is the end of the law for righteousness. When the congregation were assembled in the synagogue, to learn the hidden meaning of what the Prophets taught, he was in the midst, explaining the things concerning himself, for to him gave all the Prophets witness. When the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, and the palsied, and the leprous, were huddled helpless together in their misery, he was in the midst, healing them that had need of healing, for he came to bind up the broken-hearted and set the captive free. When the group of mourners were weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, he stood in the midst, commanding the dead to come forth, for he is the resurrection and the life.

When heathen soldiers and Jewish priests were congregated in the hall of Pilate, animated by a common enmity to the Prince of Peace, there he was in the midst, as a lamb led to the slaughter, opening not his mouth. When in Gethsemane, on one side stood angels, bright and burning flames of fire, Jehovah’s messengers, and on the other lay wearied men asleep, alike unable—angels and men—unable to make the cup of wrath pass from his lips; there was Jesus in the midst treading the wine press alone, with garments rolled in blood. When he was nailed to the cross, it was not only in the midst between two guilty suffering men. There was the justice of God burning: and there, by their representative, the whole ransomed Church, to meet the consuming fire. Infinite justice, like a flood long pent up, was ready to overwhelm sinning souls. There were the powers of hell ready to drag the guilty away in triumph to eternal woe. There were God, the judge, and sinning men, ready to meet: and the meeting—oh, what would the meeting have been to you and me had it not been for this Jesus in the midst! Help was then laid on a mighty one. He secured, and drank in, and exhausted, the wrath of God, due for the sin of all the Church. He was the daysman between us both. The beloved one received from the Father what sinners deserved; and sinners, believing, get from God what was due to his own

beloved. Believers, this is all the ground of your hope, that he has put himself between you and the justice of God. When God sees you in Christ, he is no longer angry : when you see God in Christ, you are no longer afraid. The one channel through which the love of a reconciled God flows down to earth, and the answering love of reconciled men rises up to heaven, is Jesus in the midst—this same Jesus.

II. Let us fix our contemplation now more particularly on that one step of Messiah's progress which is presented in the text—see Jesus numbered with transgressors in his death. This is a great sight. It is Christ crucified ; and not only so, but crucified between two wicked men, suffering for their own guilt.

*Christ upon the cross !* Be still, and know that he is God. He is travelling in the greatness of his strength. Christ crucified is “the power of God.” He is bearing sin ; its sting sinks into his soul. He is drinking up the vials. He is undergoing the hiding of the Father's countenance. What meaneth that cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” “If it be possible, let this cup pass !” No, it was not possible ; the Covenant cannot be broken. Sinners, God did not break through his own well-ordered Covenant in answer to the agonizing cry of the man Christ Jesus, and think you that, when you begin to cry to the mountains and the rocks to cover your unpardoned souls, think you that God will break his Covenant for you, to save you in a way of your own devising ? “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” Look unto him, all ends of the earth, and be saved.

Crucified in the midst, between two thieves. Believer, be not ashamed of him. He was not ashamed to take that place. He went into that place to take you out of it : he suffered among sinners that you might rejoice among saints. He died on the cross that you might live upon a throne.

The purpose of God was accomplished in the peculiar position of Jesus when he finished transgression. The purpose formed at first, and by prophets proclaimed, must needs be accomplished. “He was numbered with transgressors.” Nor was it alone the fulfilment of prophecy : it was also a visible manifestation of his redeeming work. In this last look we get of a suffering Saviour, is exhibited his mediatorial kingdom. Sinners the chief were there, and it was necessary that he should take his place among them. He suffered among sinners, and with them, and like them, and for them. This place was given him that all the ends of the earth might have hope when they look to him for salvation. The work was finished. The lowest depths of humiliation were reached, and passed. Into what depths soever sin had brought men, thither had Immanuel gone in their nature, to bear the doom and set the captive

free. Jews and Gentiles, though they knew it not, combined to perfect that which concerned the Saviour's work. The malicious hearts of Jewish priests, and the rude hands of Roman soldiers, became unconsciously the servants of God, in putting Jesus in the midst of sinners, when he gave his life a ransom for them—so, holding forth the very ground of hope, that he might become sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

After Jesus was lifted up on the cross, one chief sinner suffering near yielded to him, and was saved: another chief sinner suffering near rejected him, and perished. Oh, there was a deep design in so ordering the crucifixion of Jesus, that he should be in the midst between these two wicked men! This is the very place he has chosen—the midst of sinners, suffering, and ready to perish—that sinners on either side might look unto him and be saved. He was lifted up, that he might draw all men unto him.

Jesus was within sight of both these wretched men. The light of this sun, more soft and winning now in the hour of his going down, streamed forth on all around. The look of love—love in death—love of God in Christ—the look of love from the face of Jesus fell on either side, to meet the beholder's eye. The groaning, "My God, my God"—the agony of our Covenant head when the sin of all the ransomed lay upon his soul—the deep sighing in the spirit of the man Christ Jesus, when he gave his soul an offering for sin, fell alike on the ears of both the dying men. One of them, after long resisting—a resistance continued even when he was nailed to the cross—yielded to the power of this love, melted under this look, and gave in his submission, "Lord, remember me!" It was evidence of the Spirit's work. That man, at that hour, could not have called Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. He was received at once, and without upbraiding. He got assurance that his soul was safe, and departed in peace. The other kept tempting Christ, instead of trusting him, "*If thou be Christ save thyself and us.*" The man who would speculate about Christ's power, instead of accepting Christ's offer, continued his doubting until his lingering spirit left the tortured body, and passed away into darkness. The door was shut. Ah, Jesus did not take that place to be tried, but to be trusted.

Many a parable did Jesus *speak* in his life, to shew the nature of his kingdom and its laws: here is a parable with the same intent, enacted in his death. He is set a sufferer in the midst of sinners. While he is enduring death himself, he gives forth life to others. In the act of dying, he overcomes death, and already dispenses the rewards of victory. So Jesus is set forth crucified among you; and literally, when he is set forth crucified, it is as before, *in the midst of sinners*—sinners

justly suffering for their own guilt—shut up under chains to the judgment of the great day. And still the experience is the same. This scene, representing sinners' experience on Calvary, is a shadow of the things to come, both in its good and its evil—both in its faith and its unbelief. They are all alike lost that are now around him. "On either side one"—on either side many. They see—they hear alike, when in the word and sacrament Christ is set forth. Lo ! "one on this side turns him round confiding. Hear his self-surrender—hear his leaning, beseeching faith ; "Lord remember me !" See the sudden peace breaking in upon his spirit ; see the smile of joy playing on his countenance, as he hears the covenant of his peace confirmed by Immanuel's lips—" *Thou shalt be with me.*" Enough ; Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. On this side, there is the sinner saved. On that side, now as then, there is a sinner equally in need. Before him, too, Jesus is in his ordinances evidently set forth ; but he sees no beauty to be desired—feels no love to constrain him—knows no worth to trust in. He looks upon the same object, but it is only with the eye of sense. He has no faith to behold the unseen things.

As then, so now, in the administration of the kingdom, the sinner saved and the sinner lost are very near each other, and both very near the same Jesus. Literally, when he is set forth in word and sacrament, it is on either side one—a saved believer here, ready for rest, and a formalist, with a name to live, there, ready to be cast away—"on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." To both he looks, and speaks. "Come out from among them, and I will receive you." One yields, and the converse goes on. "Lord remember me ;" and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is accepted. The Spirit, ministering, conveys to his soul in secret the exalted Saviour's answer, "Thou shalt be with me." The other speculates much about what Jesus can do for him. How much must I give up if I belong to Christ ? Meantime he holds by his sins. He keeps his soul steeled against surrender. While he holds fast his portion, and keeps his eye fixed on earth, he would hold parley with the Saviour of sinners. He would stipulate, and try, and make terms. Holding, as he thinks, by both—the *sin* and the *Saviour*—he balances the profit and loss of giving up his pleasures and getting pardon. While he carries on this blind, stupid bargaining, he has a secret determination that, if matters should take a serious turn, he will close with Christ ere he die. This is the devil's cunning suggestion, to keep the man at ease in his bargaining. He thinks he can at any moment secure his safety, by repenting and believing. Whenever he sees the symptoms of death coming on—whenever the throne of

judgment begins to cast its deep shadow across his path, warning him that the reckoning is near—he will then for safety declare on the strongest side; but meantime a willing, full surrender, he will not make. He has loved idols, and after them will he go. He will harden his heart against the melting radiance of the look of Jesus. He will not unconditionally say, *Lord*. He will speak about “one Jesus,” and speak respectfully about him too; but he will not speak to Jesus. He will not exclaim, “This God is my God”—“My beloved is mine.” He will not burst into a cry of repentance for a long-enduring hardness broken now—he will not burst into a confession, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!” He has no heart-wrung confession to utter—no confiding request to make—“Lord, remember me!” and he is sent away without the sealing of the promise—“Thou shalt be with me.”

This day it is, “on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” There is such a division, and such a difference, among sinners now who hear preached the same Jesus. Ye are near each other, and like each other. Ye are all near the cross, and yet the cross divides you. Ye have all to do with Christ crucified. He is either the saviour of life, or the saviour of death to you. The same cloud—symbol of Jehovah’s presence—beamed down light on the camp of Israel, and shrouded in darkness the host of Egypt. Is your language, “Lord remember me?” or, “If thou be Christ?” Are you among the believers, or the bargainners? But whatever side ye stand on, know ye that Jesus Christ is this day again set forth crucified among you.

III. Let us now look past these sufferings, and see that this same Jesus maintains the same place onward to the end. From the cross he descended into the grave. Faith can see “Jesus in the midst” of that dark valley which we must traverse soon. In our nature, for his people, he drank up all its terrors. The feeblest disciple now can see its shades closing round him without any of nature’s fear. “I will not fear, for thou art with me.” From the grave he rose victorious, and appeared in the midst of the mourning disciples, speaking peace to their troubled spirits. From the midst of these men of Galilee, he rose to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; and now he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne. All the angels of God worship him; ten thousand times ten thousand minister before him.

Of late years, in this land Jesus has been much in the midst. Various parties have arranged themselves on different sides, and joined issue in an arduous conflict. The name and work and crown of Christ have throughout been the grand subject of contest. We have mingled in the strife. To us, in these days of astonishment, a banner has been given to

be displayed for the truth. We have gathered round that banner, and contended in that name. What are we, and what our father's house, that we should have been chosen for this peculiar witness bearing. We have stood on the right side, and fought a good fight, and, strong in the Lord's strength, have gained a signal victory. In constituting a church, we have set "Jesus in the midst" as only King. With glad hosannahs to the Son of David, we have *said*, "Whatever others do, *we* will have this man to reign over us." It is well. Thanks be to God who has sovereignly given us this high calling! But what though Jesus be set in the midst of a Church as King, if he is not set in the heart of the Church's members. Ah, unconverted souls, what will it profit you to have crowned Christ with your hands, if you crucify him in your hearts? If in hell you lift up your eyes, being in torment, the memory of the part you took in setting Jesus on the throne of his kingdom, will not help to cool your parched tongues.

Believers, what think you of Christ? Do you delight in his fulness? Is it your soul's desire—your soul's second nature now, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth? What emotions possess you while your eyes are uplifted to trace the path of this Son of Righteousness, breaking forth at first through the morning twilight of primeval promise, and shining more and more unto the perfect day? What emotions possess you, ye pilgrims on earth, as ye trace the footsteps of his glorious marching through this waste wilderness, bearing all his redeemed Church? He is the beginning and the ending of the work of God — is the first and the last of your soul's desiring.

Waiting for the quickening Spirit to divide and apply the Word, let me yet once more repeat, *the midst* is alway the place of Jesus. To-day he is set forth crucified before you; soon he will be set forth reigning over you. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." "The trumpet shall sound"—the dead shall rise—all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. The judgment will be set, and the books opened. A multitude whom no man can number gather near. Lo! they fall into two assemblies—"on either side one, and *Jesus in the midst*." They who were divided by the cross, will be divided by the throne. There is no more bargaining on this side, and no more praying on that. You do not hear from these, "*If thou be Christ*;" nor from those, "*Lord remember me*." All this is past, nothing more remains but the doom. Hear it from the midst—"Come ye blessed," and they come; "Depart ye cursed," and they depart. No more changing of sides now. You may change your side of the cross, but not of the throne. The cursed cannot escape from hell, the blessed cannot fall from heaven.



## SERMON LII.

CHRIST THE FRIEND OF HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER BEITH, STIRLING.

“ This is my friend.”—SONG OF SOL. v. 16.

IN introducing the subject of the text, it is enough to remark, without any particular reference to the context, that this is the language of the Church, spoken of her Head; in other words, the language of believers with regard to Christ.

After a description of his excellencies, in answer to the question, “ What is *thy* beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women ?”—a description expressive of unbounded admiration and affection—she concludes triumphantly by saying, “ *This* is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

In addressing you from the words selected as the subject of discourse, it will be my object to show how worthy Christ is to be spoken of as the “ friend ” of his people, and that on two grounds, *first*, because of what he undertook and what he has accomplished for them; *secondly*, on the ground of the character of his friendship.

I. *Because of what he undertook and what he has accomplished for them.*

1st, When their cause was desperate with God, he engaged to remedy it—to answer every charge to which they were liable, and he did it.

In the very first page of man's history, we behold him standing as a culprit at the bar of his Creator. That Creator had made him upright, but he had sought out inventions. The crown has fallen from his head, the gold has become dim, the most fine gold is changed. In this condition, we see the sword of justice unsheathed against the offender, and ready to fall on him, when, according to the engagement in the everlasting Covenant, the Son of God interposes, and himself stands under the uplifted hand of injured justice to receive the stroke. Forthwith the voice is heard, “ Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts : smite the shepherd.” He becomes the sufferer. He is “ made a curse,” to redeem them that are under the curse.

The hand of that law, also, which is perfectly holy, just, and good, is seen laid on the unhappy culprit, and a voice is heard, saying, "Pay me what thou owest, lest I hale thee to the judge, and the judge cast thee into prison, whence there can be no escape until the uttermost farthing is paid." Again there is the same blessed interposition—"Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." And for his righteousness' sake, God is well pleased to do it; for by it that law is magnified and made honourable.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his *friends*;" but greater love even than this Christ himself manifested, for it was "when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son," even that death which he accomplished at Jerusalem, with all its attendant humiliation and terrors, the Scripture account of which is so familiar to our minds. The whole cup of wrath was drunk—the utmost farthing, as engaged for, was paid, so that both sinner and substitute, debtor and surety, were discharged together. Justice and law had no further claim. "Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other." "This is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

2dly, He purchased their persons, that he might be free to bless them as he saw meet.

It is written, accordingly, that Christ's people "are not their own"—that they are "bought," and that the price is not any thing "corruptible," like silver and gold, but "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." An idea suggested by this truth is, that Christ hath thus purchased his people, to assert a right and authority over them—to *enforce* obedience to his will, and to lay them under a contribution of service to him. And all this is true, in a sense; but we are apt to forget how the purchaser buys his people unto the "obedience of the just," and moreover that when he does it, it is not for benefit or profit to himself, but for blessing to them.

Having them as his own, it is his *delight* to *enrich* and *honour* them to the utmost. How, may we believe, did the heart of Boaz swell with the thought of rescuing Ruth and her mother-in-law from penury and reproach, and giving them a name and a place among the daughters and mothers of Israel? How must that man's benevolent spirit have exulted to contemplate her, but lately a humble gleaner, mistress of a princely inheritance? But have we not in Boaz an emblem of Christ, and in the objects of his favour representations of those humble ones whom Christ delights to honour? In a particular application of the matter referred to, perhaps we might say that in the elder widow, we see the Jewish Church—in the younger, the Gentile; the former, in the

time of her need, supported for a while by the poor gleanings, in the field of their common Lord—of the younger, directed into it by herself; that younger at length, in the time of the end, making the elder the joyful nurse of a blessed progeny, and both together rejoicing in the peace and protection of his house. But speaking generally, here we do see Christ “raising up the poor out of the dust, and lifting the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.”

Having them as his own, *he strips them of their filthy garments—he washes them from their sins.* But a little ago these were “as scarlet,” they were “red like crimson;” but it is all gone. The deepest stains are effaced, and there is to be seen only the stainless purity of the “snow” and “wool.” He clothes them with change of raiment. There is that in his house which is called “the best robe.” It is of spotless white—incapable of being soiled—incapable of waxing old. This is that which so covers them that their sin and transgression is for ever hid, and shall no more rise against them to condemn. With what a delighted eye must the rejoicing Father of the Prodigal have received his restored son when thus arrayed! What though he had come back to him destitute and wretched—what though of the substance he had carried away there was none—what though he had come in filthy rags, and with a wearied, wasted frame—he is now “washed, justified.” The ring is on his finger, the shoes are on his feet, and he sits at a welcome table adorned in the proper clothing of the house. It is an emaciated frame that the Father’s eye falls on—it is a pale countenance and a hollow eye—sorrow and shame have imprinted their lines there—still in him he traces the lineaments of the family—he sees a child—a son that was lost but is found, that was dead but is alive again! It is with such a pleasant countenance that Christ beholds his own, triumphantly demanding “Who shall lay anything to their charge?”

Having them as his own, *he reveals himself to them.* He cures the blindness with which the God of this world had afflicted them. He makes the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God” in him to enter their hearts. Having given them eyes to see this, and hearts to appreciate it, he enables them to contrast with it the glory of everything else. The comparison is no longer between one earthly thing and another, but between all earthly things and Christ. And whatever be the glory that may attach to these earthly things, it is then changed into corruption, because of the clear view of the “glory that excelleth.” The slight gilding which exhibited the things of the world, as if they were valuable, is rubbed off, and the worthlessness which that hid is disclosed. The

thin crust of sweetness which covered the deadly poison is removed, and the true character of what we were eagerly swallowing to our destruction is at length known; and thus, not as matter of passion, of prejudice, of party, of an excited mind, or of enthusiastic feeling, but of intelligent, deliberate, faithful, and undivided affection, he attaches the soul to himself. It has been too long ignorant of him—too long estranged from him—too long his enemy, and it hastens accordingly to give itself exclusively and for ever to him.

Having them as his own, *he puts his law in their hearts and writes it in their minds.* With their whole soul they consent unto it as “holy just, good.” They delight in it after the inward man. Christ’s, language in effect to them then is not, “I have bought you; and you therefore owe me the service of a slave;” but, “Having redeemed you to myself, having made you free from the law of sin and of death, having given you my spirit, and the liberty which he ever brings with him—in one word, having revealed to you my glory and given myself to you, ‘If ye love me keep my commandments.’” It is an appeal the power of which is felt from the first moment that we become acquainted with the grace of God, and that we are made the willing debtors of that grace; but it is an appeal the power of which increases as we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, not only of what he has introduced us to the enjoyment of, but of his tenderness, and forbearance, and compassion! “This is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

*3dly,* He has gone before to the place of final rest, there to appear for them, thence to hold communication with them, and thither to take them at last.

The Church immediately after Christ’s ascension was as sensible of his presence in the midst of them, as when they beheld him with their bodily eyes, and heard him with their ears. They knew that he was “with them,” though he “had gone into Heaven, and was on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.” And such is the persuasion now of all who have similar faith with theirs, according to the strength of that faith. Time does not change Christ. What he was eighteen hundred years ago he is now. “He abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself,”—“the same yesterday to-day and for ever.”

He has taken possession, in name of his people, of the inheritance procured for them by himself. When he purchased themselves, at the cost already spoken of, he redeemed also the inheritance which was once theirs; and having “spoiled principalities and powers,” making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in his cross, “he ascended

up on high leading captivity captive." Having wrested the prey from the spoiler, he went into Heaven to receive the reward. He went to receive a kingdom; and as the "first fruits of them that slept," to enter for all of them on the possession of that to which he had established an unquestionable claim. "Whither the forerunner has for us entered."

He pleads in their behalf. Though heirs—heirs of God—joint-heirs with Christ, his people are here in a state of nonage, and are left to struggle with a thousand difficulties. Their hearts are right—their spirits are willing—their cause is good; but they are encompassed with innumerable infirmities. Sin mingles in, cleaves to, everything with which they have to do. It is the parent evil with which they have to contend. Amidst the toils of the conflict to which they are called, the complaint is ever heard, "Oh, wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" for they know that their Lord has written many things to them, "that they sin not." Sin is that, therefore, which they hate—which they fear—which they flee; yet to them belongs a high privilege in such circumstances. It is, that "if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That advocate pleads his own merits in their behalf—even Gethsemane—Calvary—a perfect righteousness; and, when hope often seems ready to die within them, they are revived, strengthened, upheld, because he "maketh intercession for them."

He makes to them every needful communication for their progressive preparation for heaven, and for their comfort in the meantime. Both may not always consist. If their present comfort only were consulted, their preparation might be retarded or prevented, and Christ loves them too well to sacrifice the one to the other; but, in as far as they may consist, both are provided for. "He afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men." When he does, it is no pleasure to him; for "in their afflictions he is afflicted;" but it is for "their profit, even that they may be made partakers of his holiness." Who can question Joseph's love for his Father's house under every circumstance? When sold as a slave by his brethren—unjustly imprisoned on a false charge—raised to be the first man in Egypt, under the monarch—his affectionate recollections of all his kindred remained unaltered, and were unaffected by the strongly contrasted changes which he underwent. The apparently harsh treatment of the patriarchs, when they came to that distant land seeking bread, forms no exception. He spake roughly, but he felt tenderly—oh how tenderly!—towards every one of them. He treated them as spies—the enemies of the country of which he was the guardian and the governor; but even then he gave them food for

their families, the best of the land of Egypt, and accepted no equivalent in return. There was love in his harshness. Joseph well knew that if his brethren were the same as when he had last met with them—the same unhumbled and wicked men—if they cherished the same obvious and revengeful feelings towards himself, it could be neither beneficial for them nor safe for him to receive them into closer intimacy than that of dependant suppliants for his favour and bounty. And it was not more to test their character, than to produce the results in them which he longed to see, that he subjected them to all the pain and anguish of heart with which, for a time, they were torn. But when, in the end, he did behold their unaffected humiliation—heard their acknowledgment of sin against God in their conduct to himself, and that not from feigned lips, but evidently under convictions which grace alone could produce—how eager to communicate assurance of his favour, to speak comfortably to them, to dispel their fears, and to make them partakers of all his own privileges, as far as that might be! Certainly in all this we see Christ, by the discipline of his house, preparing his people to be received unto himself, that “they may be with him where he is,” and meanwhile giving such comfort as may be consistent with this high and blessed object.

He regulates every event in their history for their eternal benefit, without respect to their own views. Like the bold and skilful pilot who, when passengers and crew together, in their alarm, cry out for the “shore,” and urge him to seek the harbour, steers his ship away from land, out and out into the dark waters, or amidst foaming tide-ways, lending a deaf ear alike to remonstrance and upbraiding, and this because it is the course which alone can preserve from shipwreck, so Christ heeds not the crying of his children in the time of their peril and their fear, but, keeping his eye on their true interests, he regulates every event so that these may be promoted, whatever their lamentations or their prayers. Beholding all that affects them from the heights of high heaven, whilst they themselves, amidst the confusion and darkness which prevail below, see nothing but that with which they are in immediate collision—contemplating the end from the beginning, and knowing the relation of the present to the future, that which they do not and cannot—he often makes them to “drink of the wine of astonishment,” and “by fearful works in righteousness” answers their prayers. But even then—in the lulls of the tempest, and when there is composure and reflection to receive it—may there he heard words of comfort, saying unto them, “It is I; be not afraid;” “What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter.”

He meets them at Jordan. There he is “with them.” The ark of  
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the Testament, which preceded Israel in all their journeyings, on which rested the cloud, spreading its shade over their hosts by day, and becoming a wall of fire around them by night, the token and emblem of the Divine presence, at once the guide and protection of the chosen people—the ark, when, at length, their wanderings ceased, and Jordan, under its irresistible influence, opened a way for them to pass through—for the first time in their eventful history, “stood still,” whilst the people passed on. There it *stood*, “on dry ground,” in midst of that mighty river, whilst tribe after tribe marched through the awful chasm. If there was risk that the walls of water should fall in, that the accumulated floods should break through the restraint that withheld, and cease to obey the power which controuled them, to that risk the ark of the covenant was exposed; and if destruction came on the many thousands of Israel, it must come upon it. For not until “all the people were clean passed over, did the ark of the Lord pass over”—not until the least and weakest of the ransomed of the Lord was safe in the land of rest long promised, long sought, long expected, did the emblem of the Divine presence emerge from that place of apparent danger, and rejoin those whom it had so long led. Christ meets his people, and is “with them,” in a special sense, in the swellings of Jordan. For this reason, that river, mighty though it be, cannot “overflow them.” The emblem in Israel’s history which portrays this, is not more descriptive of so precious a truth, than are the confirmations of it by express promises conclusive. He hath “destroyed death, and him that hath the power of death;” he hath so triumphed over the last enemy, so provided against all his terrors, that the song of victory may be already sung by all who are his. Their encounter with that enemy may be in a dark and troublous day—Jordan may have on its most angry look, may apparently be overflowing all its banks, all its billows may seem ready to go over their head, and, because of the affliction thus produced, but transient and partial glimpses may be enjoyed of Him who is “their salvation,”—nevertheless they are safe, for Christ perishes if they perish; he that led them all their life long now stands in the flood; and when, after a little, they open their eyes in the world of spirits, and look back on the departed trouble, the words with which we may conceive them first greeted shall be—“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” “This is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!”

But he is worthy to be so spoken of,

## II. *On the ground of the character of his friendship.*

1st, It is an indissoluble friendship. This character of it is clearly indicated in the first expression of the text. In that there is evidently

allusion to the marriage relation. More than a brother's friendship is spoken of. "This is *my beloved*, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." The Church is "flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone." He and she are "one body," "one spirit." Such are some of the expressions employed in the Word, to set forth the character of the union—the friendship subsisting between Christ and his people.

This, at least, may truly be said to be a marriage made in heaven. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." It is God that forms it; and who will put asunder what he has joined together? Where death may intervene, earthly friendships of this kind, even formed by him, are dissolved. It is his own appointment, that the "woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Then she is "free to be married to another man." But Christ is a husband that never dies. And that spouse whom he takes as his own, he first makes worthy of such a bridegroom; for she, too, is endowed with a life that can never know death. Once dead, but now raised to life by his own power, she dieth no more. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."

This friendship, indissoluble from the moment it is first formed of God, because of the nature of the relation in which the parties stand to each other, becomes increasingly so, if that be possible, by the "cords of love," being every day made stronger between Christ and his own. It is not a friendship on either side that wearies of its object. It is not a friendship which, having viewed its object at first, through the false and delusive medium of an absorbing passion, has been deceived in it, and, on discovery of the deception, cools, fades, falls away, until it ceases altogether, or sinks into indifference, bearing proportion in its extent to the blind ardour that once raged. But it is a friendship based on intelligent, holy, as well as affectionate choice; he that led to it, that formed it, being the Father who so loved us that "he gave his only begotten Son, that we might live by him." It never wearies of its object, for it is never disappointed, never deceived. It grows, it increases continually. On Christ's side it is perfect from the beginning, as existing in his heart; but the manifestations of it to us multiply every day. On our part, the growth is according to every fresh discovery made by us of grace and glory in the person, character, and work of him who is to our hearts "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."



*2dly*, It is marked by uniform constancy. Christ is a friend that "loves at all times." We have seen that his love was stronger than death; therefore "many waters cannot quench it." How much do we do, calculated to extinguish his regard, were that possible? What waywardness, what folly, what inconstancy on our part! Who sin as do the true people of Christ, when we take into account their privileges! In point of fact, Israel never sank, in the days when they were a people, into the degrading vices of the surrounding nations, the dark places of the earth; yet what sin was like their sin, for whom God had done such great things! Who so stiff-necked, so rebellious, so grievous in their ways as they! So now, so at all times. Who so full of provocation as the very friends of Christ! Yet he abideth faithful. His constancy is unchangeable. Among men there are met with sometimes those of lofty and magnanimous spirit, whose "glory it is to pass over a transgression," who can bear with the provocations and waywardness of those whom they make their friends, and who, notwithstanding many faults in them, remain unchanged; and there are those also of little minds who are readily offended by every trifle, and seem to think it duty which they cannot omit, to resent to the utmost every offence—persons changeable as the winds, the occasion of whose offence it requires long and painful search to discover, and when discovered, no less painful exertion to remove. But in the case of those even farthest removed from such a character, and with dispositions best fitted for friendship, men truly friendly, there are times unfavourable to friendship, when its claims seem unheard, and when its exercise ceases. There are hours of coldness and indifference that seem almost to forbid the hope of restored warmth. Not so with Christ. He "loves at all times." He is "fairer than the sons of men." He changeth not—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But for the sake of his friends—but for their profit—even his manner towards them would not be affected by their folly. When at any time "they forsake his law," and "walk not in his judgments," and "break his statutes," or "keep not his commandments," he "visits their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless his loving kindness he does not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." There is still the unchanging constancy of affection. It is the same eye of love that falls on them, even when they may be denying him; and it is the same hand of unaltered cordiality which grasps theirs, when they return to him!

*3dly*, It is distinguished by unswerving faithfulness. Among men prosperity usually "maketh many friends," whilst they who travel under the dark shadow of adversity, the unfortunate, are "separated

from their neighbours," So well known is it that such a lot banishes many called friends, that however painfully felt when it comes, it is a thing almost uniformly looked for. The house of mourning is no pleasant place for the selfishness of mere worldly affection. Such is the manner of men. But Christ is a "brother," a friend "born for adversity." That is his time, the season of his opportunity. He would show himself a friend "at all times;" but we often care not for such a blessing, and secretly bid him away from us. With such conduct, however grieving to his spirit, he bears long, and patiently abides his time. At length it comes. We feel ourselves as if deserted of all. Father and mother both forsake us, and then he takes us up. He knows our soul in adversity. He leads us into the wilderness, and there he speaks comfortably to us. How precious that there he should do so! What life in his favour, in his loving kindness, then! How often have we felt when kindness was shown to us, that it was not so much the amount of benefit conferred, the value of the gift bestowed, which made it sweet, as the manner, the grace, with which it was done, the time chosen for doing it. Not the strength of Jonathan's love for David, strong though it was, gave to his affection all its value, but that he, in his circumstances, should love him at all—that Saul's son should be David's friend to his own injury, and most a friend in the time of David's deepest distress!

The unswerving faithfulness of that friend for the persecuted son of Jesse is but a faint shadow of Christ's for his people. He so commends his love to them in this, as to ensure the confidence of their hearts under every variety of circumstance. The inmost thoughts are disclosed to him—every secret revealed—every burden cast on him. And Oh! how precious, then, what he undertook—what he accomplished—and what he is now doing at the right hand of God! How precious this for life; for death, for eternity! Can anything separate us from His love? No. "Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature." "This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

"A man that hath friends," saith Solomon, "must shew himself friendly." Here is the announcement of a general principle; but, to shew its application, he adds, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Do you need to be informed who that friend is? We have spoken of him. Who of you feels that *he is your friend*? To them I say, "show yourselves friendly."

1st, Give him your heart. This will ensure you giving all that you have. Many seem to give him much, very much, but none give him anything truly, till they have first given themselves. The union to Christ by faith is not one of mere convenience, it must be one of affection, and being one of affection, what will you, what can you, withhold from him? He cares not on account of its value for what you bring him; but he does care for it as the token of your love. Whilst "thousands of rams, and tens of thousands of rivers of oil" would be scorned by him without this, with it the cup of cold water is of great price. The selfish thought, therefore, finds no place in the mind of a true friend of Christ. "With how little can I secure the character of being friendly—how little will satisfy Christ on this head?" But the reigning sentiment is, "How much can I bring to him—how can I be most exclusively his?" It is not the spirit of Ananias, who brought a part of the price of his land as the whole, but of Peter, who "left all and followed Christ." If he is our friend indeed, we shall go and do likewise, and thus show ourselves friendly.

2d, Love his friends. The friend of him to whom we have given our heart, we love next to himself. Christ puts it, that if we love not them whom we have seen, we cannot love him whom we have not seen. Love of the brethren is insisted on as indispensable, where there is the love of Christ, and on this principle it must be so. It has been remarked, that, not unfrequently, relations by marriage are more loved than those who are relations by blood. However this may be, we know that to them who would shew themselves friendly to Christ, it is said, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget, also, thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty;" and we know that in the same spirit, Christ himself hath said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." The truth is, that whatever may be the strength of natural affection, never weakened certainly by our shewing ourselves friendly to him that "loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood;"—whatever the strength of natural affection, it is a principle altogether different from, and of inferior character to, that by which we are attached to him. Therefore we love Christ's friends, and our friends, because they are his, as we love none else. Far from being cold to them or against them, we must be on their side, we must stand on their ground, we must weep when they weep, and rejoice when they rejoice, though all who are most near and most dear in this world, after the flesh, even oppose and persecute us for it. The principle of love to him "who

first loved us" within our souls, demands it ; and as surely as God in his grace hath enabled us to say of Christ, "this is my friend," we shall in this way "show ourselves friendly." How strong are Christ's appeals in behalf of his friends ! They are as "sheep among wolves." "Offences," therefore, "must come," but "woe unto them by whom they do come ;" better that a "millstone were hanged about their neck, and they cast into the sea, than that they should offend one of these little ones." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye have done it not unto one of the least of these, ye have done it not unto me.'

END OF VOL. I.







